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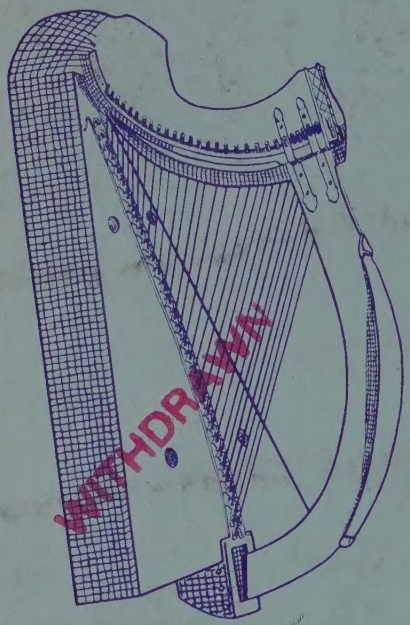

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Richard Wagner

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HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN

Richard Wagner

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

By G. AINSLIE HIGHT

AND REVISED BY THE AUTHOR

WITH PHOTOGRAVURES AND COLLOTYPES,
FACSIMILES AND ENGRAVINGS

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J. M. Dent & Co.
Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company
1897

Preface to the German Edition

IN my little treatise "*Das Drama Richard Wagner's*"[1] I announced my intention of writing a larger work on the Bayreuth Meister.

Just at the moment when my preliminary studies had advanced so far that I could think of attempting the execution of my plan, the publishers, Messrs Friedrich Bruckmann, proposed that I should write the text for an illustrated Life of Wagner. Honourable as this commission was, it had little attraction for me at first. In Carl Friedrich Glasenapp's *Life of Richard Wagner* the world possesses a classical biography of the great word-tone-poet; a voluminous autobiography will moreover some day be published; several excellent little popular accounts of his life have been written by various authors. A new biography therefore seemed to me scarcely calculated to meet any real requirement. The publishers however agreed to my proposal to compose, not a biography in the narrower sense of the word, but so to speak a *picture;* not a chronological enumeration of all the events of his life in proper order, but rather a sketch of the entire thought and work of the great man, and so I felt it my duty to postpone the execution of my first design, and to carry out the present work to the best of my abilities. A work of this kind about Wagner does not exist up to the present time.

Shall I return to my former intention at some future date? By the publication of this work its centre of gravity must of course be seriously displaced. Here I have been led, from first to last, by the wish to view Wagner *from within*, to represent him and the world as *he* saw them both. This is the only way of knowing a man. Truth is an inward light; the outer light glances back from the surface and dazzles the spectator;

[1] Breitkopf und Härtel, 1892. The later, revised and improved French edition is entitled *Le Drame Wagnérien* (Chailley, 1894).

but if he take up his position in the shade, and content himself with fanning this inner light, the whole form will become translucent. The only object of the present work was Wagner's individuality, which therefore had to engage my full, undivided attention; none the less however is it an interesting exercise to regard Richard Wagner from *without*, to trace his position in the history of art and in the development of the human mind, to determine the diagonal resulting from the will and the cognition of a rare genius, on the one hand, and the will and cognition of a hundred thousand less gifted men on the other. Perhaps I shall venture upon it some day.

The publishers thoroughly understood and at once accepted my proposal with regard to our undertaking; although the initiative came from them the present form of the book is thus our common work. They also acceded to my wish that all superfluous matter in the way of illustrations, such as portraits of singers, caricatures, etc., should be removed; had they wished to speculate on cheap sensation the material would not have been wanting; but on the other hand they spared no pains or sacrifice to procure everything which was really important, and to carry out the pictorial portion of the work technically in such a way as became the dignity of the subject. The obliging spirit in which they were met at Wahnfried, as well as by the Intendants of various court-theatres, and by the Masters' numerous friends both at home and abroad, is evidenced by the list of illustrations. The fact that the "Wagner Museum" bluntly refused all assistance may be mentioned merely for the benefit of collectors of historical material; not a single item have we lost in consequence of this refusal, and the more laborious search has brought to light many a precious document which might otherwise have remained unknown to us.

In H. Hendrich the publishers secured the assistance of one of the very few painters whose imagination is not misled by the picture on the stage, who are able to grasp the central poetic idea, and to reproduce it freely in accordance with the character of their own art. The connection between the thought of the work and the pictures has been supplied by A. Frenz with deep symbolism in his vignettes.

As for the text, my thanks are due more particularly to my dear

and much honoured friend Carl Friedrich Glasenapp for his disinterested help. I also desire here to express publicly my thanks to my former master and friend of many years' standing, Gymnasiallehrer Herr Otto Kuntze in Stettin. To him I owe my command of the German language, and therewith my ability to write the book; besides this he has undertaken the troublesome work of correcting the proofs.

And so may this attempt to sketch in a comprehensive form a comprehensive picture of the great German go forth, and do its part in contributing to a better understanding of one who was a hero both in mind and heart —Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; may it find its way to many more hearts.

Vienna, *November* 1895.

HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN.

Abbreviations used in this Translation

Roman numerals, I., II., III., etc., refer—unless some other author is expressly mentioned—to the German edition of Wagner's collected Writings and Poems. The page numbers are those of the large edition, which is always the highest authority. Those who possess the smaller edition will have no difficulty in finding the place with the aid of the comparative tables.

E denotes the volume: *Entwürfe, Gedanken, Fragmente.*

L the two vols. of Correspondence between Wagner and Liszt. Translated by F. Hueffer. London, 1888. 2 vols.

U the vol. of Richard Wagner's Letters to Theodor Uhlig, Wilhelm Fischer, Ferdinand Heine. Translated by J. S. Shelock, etc. London, 1890.

R the small collection of Letters to August Roeckel. English translation with Introductory Essay by H. S. Chamberlain (Arrowsmith).

The reference in every case is to the original German edition.

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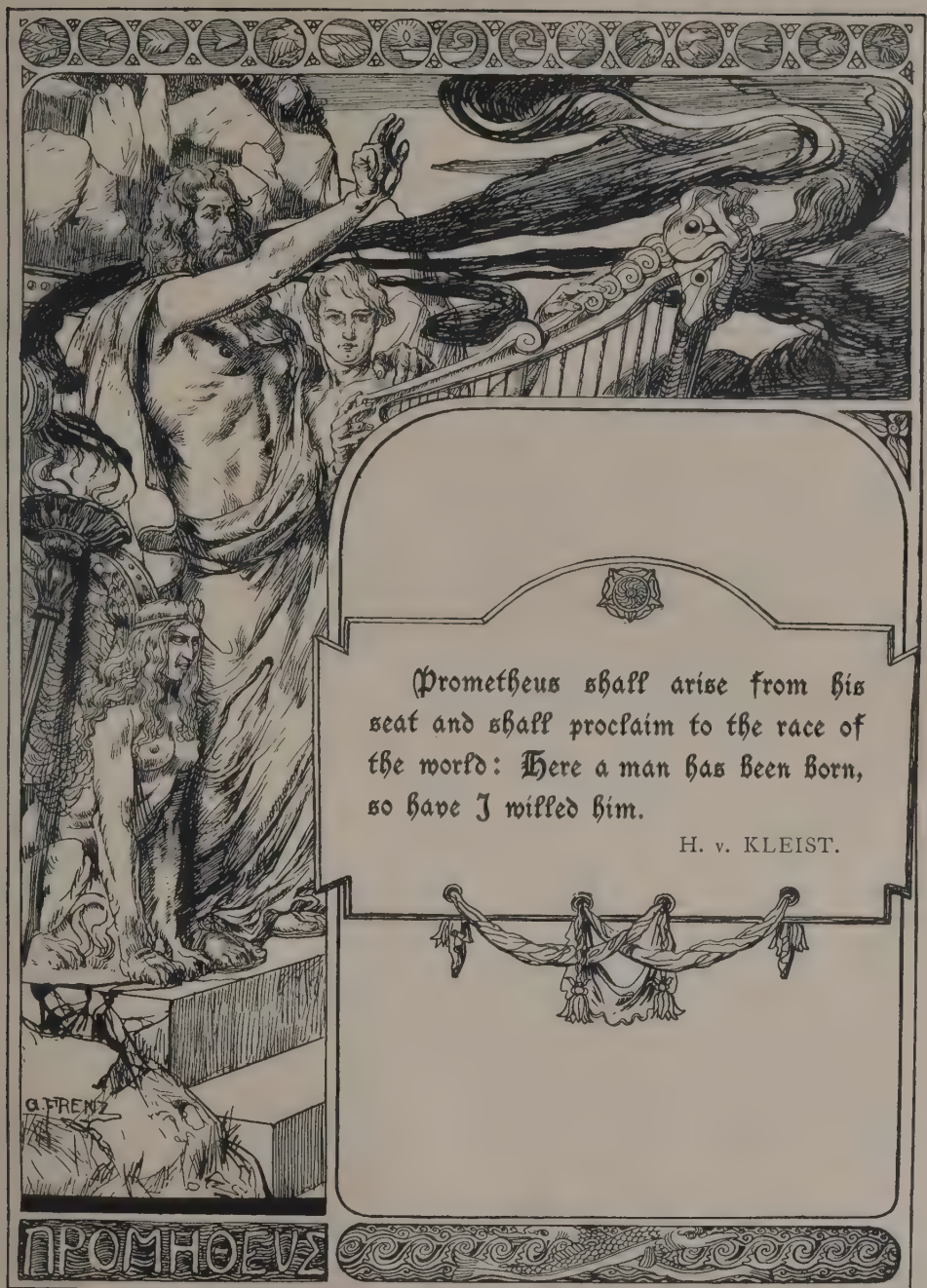


Prometheus shall arise from his seat and shall proclaim to the race of the world: Here a man has been born, so have I willed him.

H. v. KLEIST.

General Introduction

"Not for fulness of knowledge should
we strive, but for fulness of understanding."
DEMOCRITUS.

General principles.

AN old proverb says: Speech is silver; silence is golden. An ideal book would be one which fulfilled both parts of this wise saying—that is, it would speak in silver and be silent in gold. Voltaire remarks very justly that to tell everything is the secret of being dull. The burden which oppresses our entire intellectual lives and robs us of light and air is excessive talk and the discussion of material stored up in every department of knowledge. Richard Wagner expresses it frankly as his opinion that with the invention of printing —certainly with the rise of journalism—the faculty of healthy judgment has imperceptibly deteriorated amongst mankind. To say everything is as mischievous as it is tedious, and one of the first duties of a biographer is to free his subject from the enormous mass of superfluous matter with which he finds it loaded. Especially at the present day, when every trifling circumstance connected with a famous man, almost every word which falls from his lips in public is caught up by the press, and so fixed in people's minds; when casual letters to intimate friends, utterances perhaps due to some momentary feeling of irritation, and only really intelligible to the one friend to whom they were addressed, are handed over without mercy to the highest bidder; when everything is given indiscriminately to the public, stored up in museums and archives some day to furnish material for endless writings and controversies, the production of a complete and exhaustive biography of a man of the significance of Richard Wagner would be the work of a life-time. Indeed one life-time would scarcely suffice; the biographer would be like Tristram Shandy, whose story was thrown back a whole year by every new day, since it is impossible to see how the flood of new publications is ever to be stayed. And the main figure itself would only be confused; its clear, bold, characteristic outline would be lost in a

cloud of trifling details. Everything human has its proper measure; too *much* is at least as great an evil as too *little*. Schopenhauer declares that one ought to be able to construct the entire man from a single action: and if this is the paradox of a clear thinker, the principle which it contains is certainly true, that in order to obtain a full understanding of any phenomenon, we must take into account not as *many*, but as *few* of the circumstances as possible, namely, those only which are necessary. What we have to aim at is simplicity. It is a law of our human intellect that the Manifold can only receive life through the One. We cannot indeed construct the whole man out of one action, but we can form no true plastic image of him until we have clearly perceived the unity of his individual nature; until we have realized that the apparent—or real—contradictions noticeable in his actions spring from the selfsame peculiarity of his character; until our spiritual vision has shown us that the development from youth to old age does not follow the course of a straight line passing through ever new worlds to be lost in infinity, but rather resembles that of a spiral winding upwards round a fixed axis, and that the limitations which are always noticeable—at least in great men—are nothing more than the formal conditions of whatever is complete in itelf. Our first aim should therefore be, not to obscure the general view by excess of matter. But if the picture is injured in its totality by superabundance of detail, it is directly falsified when the important and the unimportant are placed on the same footing. Nowhere is critical discrimination more necessary than in comparing the various experiences and utterances of a life in their mutual relations to each other. For here the laws of perspective apply, not only, as in painting, to our organ of perception and its position with regard to the object, but the object itself, as a thinking and acting individual, exhibits a foreground, middle distance, and distance, at one time admitting of expanded and detailed treatment, at another precluding it: here requiring sharp outlines and brightly lighted masses, there only the merest indication. He who fails to bring out the relative value of his facts, and like a Chinese artist draws everything to the same scale, not only spoils his work, but produces a false and distorted picture. In the following pages I have endeavoured to keep both these principles before me: to select my facts rightly, and to observe true perspective. On the other hand, I have never been tempted to follow the Fata Morgana of supposed *completeness*. Here as elsewhere the words of Democritus apply: "not for fulness of knowledge should we strive, but for fulness of understanding." A nation should *understand* its great men, should know them and love them, as we know and love a dear friend, but to stuff our brains with dates and names is labour lost, producing but barren knowledge. How does it help me to a deeper understanding of Wagner to know the dates of the first performances of all his works? or to hear the name or be shown the portrait of the excellent man who first sang Lohengrin? or to sit for ten months in the Wagner-Museum at Eisenach and read ten thousand newspaper criticisms of his works and writings? Away! away with all such irrelevant matter! The man who thirty years ago

expressed an unfavourable opinion upon a subject which he was quite unable to grasp, and had it put into type in all haste for the morning paper, was a poor creature. He had to earn his daily bread in this way, but to preserve and study his criticism as a "historical document" is absurd. Specially absurd is it in connection with a man like Richard Wagner, who condemned in such energetic terms all "clinging and hanging to the past," who urged us to "let the past be the past, the future the future, to live for to-day, for the fulness of the present, and to *create* for it;" who would have preferred to burn his own scores, who time after time exclaimed: "children! invent something *new*! *new*! once more, something *new*! As long as you hark back to the old the devil of unproductiveness has hold of you, and you are the most miserable of artists!" Yes! let us beware of this guardian deity of archives, "the devil of unproductiveness." The same Wagner warns us that the head which is absorbed in the letter sinks into idiotcy; on the other hand he speaks of the inheritance which great men have left behind to feed our hearts (*cf.* the introduction to the fourth chapter). The master-thought which controlled the life of such a man, the longing which was his guiding genius, lighting him onwards through the night of suffering, the work which his will achieved—all that is surely not a thing of the past, a thing of history, a thing to be laid amongst old records; it is a living seed which looks for fresh nourishment in our hearts that it may spring up again into new life. I conceive the task which I have set myself of portraying the life of Wagner as a living, not a dead subject, it is a living seed to be buried in our hearts. Here I must briefly explain my conception of *criticism* in such a work as this. In Natural Science, the strict discipline of which I know from personal experience, criticism is never applied to the object of enquiry, but only to the subject—the observer—and the instruments which he uses. No naturalist would think of describing any peculiarity which he had found in an animal as a *fault*; with living Nature before him such a proposition would be too obviously absurd. He ascertains *how* each individual is organized, and then endeavours, as far as he is able, to explain the fitness of the entire structural design. On the other hand the method of observation itself will be subjected to severe and unremitting criticism, because nothing is more difficult than to *see* even a purely material process *correctly*. In other branches of study, such as philosophy, literature, or history, a different procedure is undoubtedly necessary, but not here, where one is dealing with a living object. I do not think that those who read this book will say that it has been written without any exercise of criticism. The very arrangement of the material, on an architectonic, rather than a chronological basis, points to critical selection and analysis. Criticism therefore with me has to do with the manner of representation, and has been especially at work, imperceptibly to the reader, in sifting and casting out superfluous matter. I have never offered criticism in the sense in which the word is understood now-a-days—that of passing a judgment upon Wagner, and this rather because it would have been contrary to the intention of the work, which was to bring Wagner nearer to the *understand-*

ing, than because I bore in mind Goethe's advice "to leave it to the common helpless crowd to praise, to accept and to reject"—for I can quite imagine that a critical discussion of Wagner might be made very interesting. A portrait must be painted by means of positive, not negative touches; the painter must give, not take away. A critical estimate of a great man by another man can never be more than a fragment, and often teaches us more about the critic himself than about his subject. My endeavour has been on the contrary in a certain sense to *reflect* the image of Wagner; the result is necessarily a reflection such as the limited capacity of my own intellect is able to produce, but it is one thing for a person who cannot possibly compare himself to Wagner in any way to approach him with the intention of measuring him—of taking his height, breadth and depth, as has already been done in more than one stout volume; quite another to content oneself with faithfully and modestly reproducing the *reduced* image existing in one's own brain. Wagner praises Liszt because "like a true poet he grasps every phenomenon of Nature in its own being, just as it is, with perfect impartiality"(Letters, I. p. 48); it is for us to practise similar impartiality. But this is not all. I have observed that the natural philosopher does not criticize the individuals which come under his notice; he does not declare that the neck of the giraffe is too long, or that the dromedary would be better with two humps than he is with one. The example of the art critic has not yet misled him into doing this. But when we have to examine a *moral* individual, instead of a visible object, such abstention from judgment suffices no longer. So to understand a personality as to be able to portray it to others as it really was, presupposes a marked degree of sympathy with it. Sympathy is the inward vision, without which we grope in the dark. Great deeds can only spring from inspiration; the man who is not inspired, who coldly examines their relations, is like a blind person trying to explain the warmth of daylight whilst unable to perceive its immediate cause—the sun in Heaven. For this reason Goethe, the typically moderate man, the calm follower of truth and justice, actually insists on the necessity of party enthusiasm in considering works and actions, and in support of his position he adds the following words which I should like to imprint on the soul of every light-hearted critic. "Delight, joy; sympathetic interest in things is the only reality; it alone calls forth what is real in ourselves. Everything else is vain, and produces but vanity." That is the decisive point! which method leads to vanity? which "nourishes the seed buried in our hearts," and thereby "calls forth what is real"? Let us ever choose the way which leads to new life; the way here indicated by Goethe. But as I know very well how seriously I and my "partisan enthusiasm" are opposed to the superstitions of our time, with its rage for criticism, I will quote one more authority. Carlyle writes at the beginning of his sketch of Mohammed: "I mean to say all the good of him I justly can. It is the way to get at his secret: let us try to understand what *he* meant with the world; what the world meant and means with him, will then be a more answerable question." In another place he ex-

presses his conviction that "On the whole we make too much of faults; the details of the business hide the real centre of it." Not therefore by counting up his supposed faults, but by acquiring an accurate knowledge of his virtues can we study the secret of any person's individuality; such at least was the opinion of one of the greatest students of history. The same faith has guided me in the following pages. True, one may and must require from any biographer an account rigidly truthful in every particular, but this is something quite different from the superficial sense in which the word "objectivity" is commonly understood. For in human deeds the outward act is obviously secondary, being in general only interesting as a symptom of that which is essential—the subjective impressions, moods, passions etc. out of which the action of the hero has proceeded. When we speak of objectivity therefore we must understand that attitude of mind which regards the subjectivity of the agent as itself object. This is impossible as long as we retain any trace of our own subjectivity, and continue to judge the agent from that standpoint, as we should a stranger. True objectivity obviously consists in identifying ourselves—so far as this is possible—with the agent; in construing his words and his actions from the standpoint of his soul, which in this case constitutes the object of perception. The common affectation of "sober objectivity" and the like is at bottom nothing more than a cloak to cover our want of power to hold our own despotic subjectivity in check; an attempt to protect ourselves from the charge by anticipating it. Truly just, and in the deepest sense truly independent is only he who can extend his objective perception so as completely to grasp the subjectivity of another. The principles here indicated would be authoritative for me in writing the life of any great man. I have only to add a few words in explanation of the manner in which I have conceived the special task of portraying the life of Richard Wagner. The life of Richard Wagner has often been treated, and from very different standpoints. For this very reason I feel myself at liberty to follow my own bent and suit my own taste. Whoever wishes to study it in greater detail can read Glasenapp; he who loves conciseness, interspersed with anecdotes, need only turn to Tappert. Muncker has written for the historian; Richard Pohl for all men of true culture; Ludwig Nohl for those of more sentimental temperament; Bernhard Vogel for the critical musician; Pater Schmid for the Ultramontane. I need not repeat what has been done already. "Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?" Such was the lament of Sterne, more than a hundred years ago. Although I have carried out my task of portraying Richard Wagner in quite a different way from my predecessors, I do not in the least wish this to be understood in a sense disparaging to them or their methods. My sincere gratitude is due to the men I have named, and to many others; my departures from them, both in the design of this book and in many facts and inferences, are not due to any vain fancy that I know better than they do, but to a conviction, and, if I may

so express it, to an inner necessity. Richard Wagner has himself often declared emphatically, that "without a strong inner necessity nothing true or genuine can ever come to pass," and to this necessity I have unhesitatingly resigned myself. May the result bear out the words of Hans Sachs:

"und wie er musst', so konnt' er's"

Richard Wagner very often and very decidedly protests against the notion of regarding art as the "special property of a class of professional artists" (*cf.* for example III., p. 176). Real art will begin according to him, "when every individual is, in some way or other, an artist" (III., 42), whereby however the word "artist" must be understood, not in a technical sense, but in reference to general mental culture; for in another place he says that we shall not have true artists until we have become true men, and he notices with approval Uhlig's interpretation of his words to mean: "not that men are to be made artistic, but that art is to become human" (Letters to Uhlig, p. 80). Art, according to him, should be no mere accessory, but an integral and most important part of our lives "not distinct from life, but with every variety of its utterance fully contained therein" (V. p. 58). It seems to me to follow conclusively from this that as long as we try to force Richard Wagner into the category of "professional artists" we shall never be able to judge him rightly. What especially distinguishes his dramas from operas is that the music in them is "not an end, but a means," and so too with regard to Wagner himself, artistic creation was not the ultimate aim of his life, but the highest and most effectual means of employing it and of attaining his real purpose. "Art is the highest expression of men's lives which they possess in common" writes the Meister; and for himself too, as an individual, art was the highest expression of his life. But it was not its only expression, nor is it rightly to be comprehended as art without a knowledge of the purely human foundation from which it sprang. No one for instance will deny that music is by far the most important means of expression in Wagner's art; the master himself calls his dramas "deeds of music," but none the less does he declare the indispensable *foundation* of complete artistic expression to be *language*. Similarly too in Wagner himself the musician outweighed the thinker and the social reformer; that was a thing of course, but he was no more an "absolute artist" than his music is "absolute music"; he could not dispense with an intellectual foundation, and the enthusiasm necessary for the achievement of his unrivalled art work sprang from his profound conviction that art possesses a higher "dignity" than merely to entertain and amuse; that its mission is rather to influence mankind and to fashion their lives. If we wish to understand Richard Wagner our first duty will be to consider the entire man, and not obstinately to fix our attention exclusively on the artist. In the man the artist will then appear ever clearer and mightier, as in the artist the dramatist, in the dramatist the musician. How the artist became the "seer" of a new world, how closely his artistic creation was bound up with all human

interests—religion, society, philosophy—I shall endeavour, without wishing to moralize or become allegorical, to make more and more clear as we go on; and especially do I hope to show how at the end of his career this purely human element gained definite, visible form in Bayreuth. In the "Bayreuth idea" the artist and the man are united in a way, convincing even to those who stand outside. Another question is, in what way a general biography should treat of the musician in Wagner. My own opinion is that in music, even more than in other arts, the technical element cannot be too distinctly separated from the poetical, though at the present day the boundary is seldom respected on either side. People quite incompetent to follow the complicated technique of a Wagner score in all its details, or to comprehend it as a whole, dabble in it to their heart's content, often with no help but that of a miserable piano arrangement, and "explain" Wagner's music to a believing public of amateurs. That I call simple Vandalism. "Technique can be discussed," Wagner writes to Louis Köhler, "but of course only among artists; the outsider should never hear aught thereof" (*cf.* the introduction to Sect. 4, Chap. 2). Still more ridiculous was the audacity with which professional musicians and critics believed for half a century that they could judge, or even censure a Richard Wagner from the standpoint of their counterpoint and supposed theory of harmony—uncertain as the laws of harmony still are in many respects. Nowhere has Wagner's music, as music, consequently met with such obstinate and hopeless ignorance as among professed musicians. Wagner wrote in 1852, "The non-musician alone has prepared the way for the understanding of Beethoven's works. . . . In a certain very important sense—perhaps in the only true sense, Beethoven has up to the present day never been understood by musicians themselves, but only by non-musicians." He could not say this of himself, since it was just the musicians —I will only instance Liszt—who crowded round him with enthusiasm from the very beginning; but it must be admitted that musicians too formed the backbone of the opposition against which his will was so often shattered—especially theoretical musicians, such as Hauptmann, Jahn, and Fétis, and the professional critics of almost every newspaper in Europe.[1] At the end of his life the great poet declared that it had been his fate "to see his art and its tendencies judged chiefly by impotent musicians." And at the present day how often do we find more or less "potent" musicians claiming Wagner as their own, as belonging to their "profession," and sometimes attacking us non-musicians pretty roughly for invading their field—with regard to which it is worth re-

[1] A few specimens of these criticisms will be quoted when we come to speak of Lohengrin. I need scarcely remind my readers that it was not in the time of Beethoven and Wagner that professed musicians and musical critics first showed their stupidity with regard to all the poetry of their art, but that they have done so from time immemorial. Sarti, for instance, said of Mozart: "Music will perish if barbarians of this kind are to attempt composition." Mozart, who could not distinguish D♯ from E♭ must, he thought, have "ears lined with iron." This is how the most distinguished professionals wrote at a time when outsiders had long ago recognised Mozart's extraordinary genius.

marking, that with the exception of two or three smaller works (Liszt—Pohl—Tappert) every complete and thoroughly trustworthy treatise on Wagner—from whatever standpoint it may have been written—has been the work of a non-musician, and that musicians themselves have contributed nothing, absolutely nothing at all of any importance in the field which specially belongs to them—that of musical technique. Mayrberger, whose early death we must all deplore, did indeed make a beginning; a few scattered remarks may be found here and there in books and periodicals, but beyond this, nothing. The technician may analyse both music and instrumentation with undoubted advantage to himself, but to describe the music, to go into ecstasies over it is of no use to anyone—every musician will agree with me about this. Here of course I am only concerned with Wagner's *life*, and no good purpose would be served by my attempting to discuss the instrument of his expression. In the chapter on his works my remarks will be intended to elucidate the poetic action, and I shall consider the instrument of expression only in so far as may appear necessary for the right understanding of the underlying thought. Similar considerations have led me to abstain from any attempt to tell the *story* of Wagner's dramatic works; it has been done a hundred times, and always with the same result; a work of art cannot be described; it must be felt. In his report on a "German school of music" to be founded in Munich, Wagner recommends that no academic lectures on the history and aesthetics of music shall be instituted. "True aesthetics, and the only *intelligible* history of music should be taught by means of correct and beautiful performances of classical works." Just as little can the aesthetics and the history of Wagner's art be taught in books; they must be studied in "correct and beautiful" performances of the works themselves. What the pen, with its circuitous descriptions, could scarcely have rendered, the engraver's art has been called in to depict. The coöperation of artists has been of invaluable assistance in relieving me of the irksome task of literary anatomy or dissection of the physiognomy of living beings. The reader will learn to know the features of the great master from the portraits which are here presented of him better than from all the descriptions in the world. To his friends—those faithful ones who fought and conquered with him—I have been able to devote but few words, but the portraits will do more to bring them near to us than could the most complete enumeration of their merits.

Of what is called "literary criticism" I have little to offer the reader. In this too I have been guided by an earnest desire to make Wagner's way of feeling my own, believing that this was the only way to acquire a real understanding of his individuality. Again and again he writes such words as these: "A literary man cannot understand me; only a complete man or a true artist" (L., I. 238). And with regard to the special literary or other preparation which some might think necessary he says: "I require nothing from the public but healthy senses and a human heart; to attempt to drum artistic intelligence into the public will only make it wholly stupid" (L., I. 87-96). Wagner expressly

says: "My aim was to prove the possibility of an art-form in which the highest and deepest things that the human intellect can grasp should be presented in such a way as to be intelligible to the simple receptive faculty derived from purely human sympathy, and in such a definite and convincing form that critical reflection should be altogether unnecessary for its comprehension" (VII. 118). And so too I wish here once for all to refer the reader to the numerous writings of other authors for all information regarding the sources which Wagner is supposed to have used for his works. Such studies are, like everything human, not without interest; I have dabbled in them myself. But in helping us to understand Wagner they are not of much use, except perhaps as showing how marvellously little Wagner owes to his sources. A single idea, an action, a word has flashed for a moment like lightning upon the fancy of the poet—there however to call forth quite a new picture, to shed light on some new connection unsuspected before. In general such questions are more of academic than of artistic interest. All *interpretations* of his works, whether allegorical, symbolical, religious or philosophical, I have preferred to avoid. When Asher communicated to Schopenhauer his intention of interpreting Goethe's *Faust* by the light of his philosophy, expecting to meet with his enthusiastic approval, Schopenhauer answered drily: "Regarding your purpose of elucidating *Faust* with my philosophy I can say nothing, as everything depends upon the way in which it is done. Anything and everything can be illuminated by its light and the view will become clearer. It all depends upon your conception of the subject; you yourself must know whether you have conceived anything clear and true and new." The same is true of all interpretations. In certain cases they may bring out a very striking truth; but as such things are not really contained in the work itself, but construed into it, everything must "depend upon the way in which it is done." An eminent example of successful treatment is Wagner's elucidation of the Oedipus dramas as showing the relation between the state and the individual (*cf.* IV. 70-80). It must be remarked that instead of bringing the great and eternal social problem to explain the works of the poet Sophocles, he follows the opposite course, and employs the poems to illustrate the fundamental problem of sociology. Wagner's commentators generally do the reverse. Provided that they have conceived something clear and new and true, no fault need be found with them for endeavouring to place their own convictions in a brighter light in this way. What we most earnestly protest against is that Wagner should be sacrificed in favour of an individual interpretation of this kind. Especially in a biography of Wagner such an attempt would be very much out of place. The artist has offered us his work as art, and as such we must accept it. "Oh men! Feel rightly, act as you feel, be free, then we will have art!" (U., 176).

General plan of the book.

About the general arrangement of my work little need be said. A single glance at the table of contents will show the very simple plan on which it is put together. From the very first, in the sketch of his life, I have endeavoured to observe my principle of utilizing, not as *many*, but as *few* facts as possible, and in

this I had the great advantage of being able to transfer many biographical details to the second, third, and fourth chapters. Although the story of his life has by this means been reduced to a mere skeleton, I hope it will be all the more recognisable as the skeleton of a living body, warm with the glowing current of life. In the second chapter, that on his literary work and teaching, I have entered more into detail than I should otherwise have done, partly because no connected account of Wagner's teaching has ever yet been attempted, partly because *here* discussion is admissible. The division into politics, philosophy, regeneration and art is artificial and didactic. It was made for the sake of clearness, and claims no further significance. In the third chapter, on the other hand, that relating to his works, I have endeavoured to say as *little* as possible so as not to injure the bloom of these glorious productions of the human mind. The attentive reader will remark that I have been guided rather by a desire to bring the character and whole personality of the hero of my book, Richard Wagner, gradually nearer to him, than by any notion of assisting him to understand the dramas, which are much better able to speak for themselves. The earlier works have indeed served me in my endeavour to trace the development of the new dramatic ideal, the word-tone-drama, by living examples, and with the aid of as little theory as possible; the later ones in like manner have been used to explain the fundamental principles of Wagner's dramas. In the fourth chapter, Bayreuth, these three threads—the struggle, the thought, the art—which had been artificially separated for the sake of the exposition, are united together again; the Festival Play House at Bayreuth is at once the outcome and the monument of all three.

Sources. As for my authorities, in the first place it will be evident from the most cursory glance through the pages of this book that I have always allowed R. Wagner to speak for himself as much as possible. That such a course was necessary in a discussion of his thoughts and his artistic productions need scarcely be pointed out. But with regard to biographical details it has been frequently asserted that Wagner's own account must not be accepted unreservedly. That is altogether untrue. To bring, as has actually been done, Goethe's *Wahrheit und Dichtung* into the argument can only be regarded as an attempt to mislead the uninstructed public. Goethe was sixty years old when he began his autobiography, and told of events which had occurred more than half a century before. Wagner's first *Autobiographical Sketch* dates from his thirtieth year, and from that time onwards we meet in his writings with numerous communications and explanations, always relating to events which have recently happened. For example, the most important contributions to our knowledge of Wagner's share in the Dresden insurrection of May 1849, about which so much controversy has arisen, is to be found in his pamphlet *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde* which was finished in August 1851, and appeared in print towards the end of the same year. The correctness of the statements which it contains is vouched for not only by Wagner's own absolute and uncom-

promising love of truth, but also by a series of letters from his hand in the years 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850. Nobody can doubt the extraordinary tenacity of Wagner's memory; no person competent to form an opinion would question his unswerving integrity, simply for the reason that his whole life was a witness to it, and that he possessed not one particle of the wisdom of the serpent, even there where it is allowable and pardonable. "He who accuses me of insincerity must answer for it to God," the master writes in one of his private letters. I consider it unnecessary to discuss this point. It has been finely said by Carlyle, "Of a great man it is incredible he should have been other than true. . . . *Sincerity*, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic." Common natures cannot understand this, and will always believe the evidence of small men rather than of great; this is not to be remedied.[1] For us it is of incalculable importance that we possess the most interesting accounts from Wagner himself, not only of his thoughts, but of all the most important events of his life, accounts which bring the external facts before us in two or three characteristic strokes without any dwelling upon superfluous detail, while yet affording a deep insight into the Meister's heart. Wagner's extensive *Autobiographical Reminiscences* are not yet published, but the numerous notices contained in his works enable us to form a complete and sufficient picture of his life, his thought and his work. Wagner's writings, with his letters and his works, will always be the most important, I might more properly say the *only* source from which we shall be able to derive a deeper knowledge of this extraordinary man.[2] One caution I must add with regard to the letters. When Wagner's friend, Theodor Uhlig died, the Meister wrote to his widow, "May I ask you to keep my letters to my departed friend—unless you wish to destroy them entirely—strictly to yourself? They are for no one else, and are for the most part of a very confidential nature; much that they contain could only be rightly understood by Theodor."[3] At a later date these letters to Uhlig were returned to Wagner, and they appeared in print with those portions omitted which he had personally indicated—those namely which were "for no one else" and which "could only be rightly understood by Uhlig." Such a thing is so self-evident; the right of every man to forbid that every heedless word which he has uttered shall be communicated to a world of strangers, as if it were the expression of his deepest convictions, is so obvious, that one would scarcely think it could be necessary to waste a word on such a matter of elementary justice But a most unfortunate indiscretion was committed with regard to this collection of letters to Uhlig. Copies of the originals were retained, and instead of being treated as strictly confidential, were

[1] "Those who are furthest removed from us really believe that we are constituted just like themselves, for they understand exactly so much of us as we really have in common with them, but do not know how little—how infinitesimally little this is of us." (L., ii. 126.)

[2] Further bibliographical particulars will be found in the appendix to chap. ii.

[3] "Das Orchester" (Dresden), September 10th, 1885.

sent abroad in every direction, handed over even to public museums, and are now ready to make known to a scandal-loving, half-informed public those very things which were only intelligible to the one friend, and perhaps only justifiable to him by reason of his own peculiar character and his special views. This one case may be taken as an example of many. At the present day a great man is beyond the law; even people otherwise respectable think that in dealing with him everything is allowed. Besides this, Wagner's letters possess a very considerable pecuniary value, both as manuscripts and especially as material for publication; now that he is dead the most secret outpourings of his heart are bought and sold as common merchandize. It would scarcely be thought possible for instance—except with Wagner, who has always been considered fair game . . . but "silence is gold." A certain method of studying Wagner's life always brings back to my mind the words of generous indignation with which Vilmar, the historian of German literature, characterizes a similar class of Goethe students, who "pry out with eager inquisitiveness names and circumstances, often in the most childish, or even dishonourable way." To this point the Wagner student has—thank goodness!—not yet advanced. But from "childish inquisitiveness" some of them are only separated by a hair's breadth. That nothing can ever result from such a procedure, except scandal and more misunderstanding, is perfectly evident; on such a soil nothing good can flourish. Vilmar adds, "in idle and unpoetic times idle and unpoetic heads may busy themselves with such frivolous trivialities and perhaps derive some profit." But one who wishes to know Richard Wagner, the poet, whose dream it was to "redeem" all mankind by making them artists, must not allow himself to be misled by the sensational discoveries and long-winded lucubrations of these "idle and unpoetic heads." On the other hand the many hundreds of letters which have been judiciously selected for publication by Wagner himself and by his heirs, as well as many more still awaiting publication, are amongst the most important documents for our knowledge of the master. One other inexhaustible source for Wagner's own words is unfortunately lost to us—his conversations. Wagner's gift of speech can perhaps be best imagined by comparing it to Beethoven's improvisation on the pianoforte; one must despair of ever forming a conception of it in any other way. Brilliancy, wit, fire are possessed by others, and are not so very uncommon;—the boundless fields of human culture, in which his great mind moved as in its proper home, were more remarkable, and could not fail to impress everyone—at first with a sense of awe; whilst his own specific *genius* showed itself in the unexpected combinations of thoughts by which the most distant objects were suddenly brought near to us, confused and abstruse relations illuminated and placed in proper order. Of all this one can however obtain at least a notion from Wagner's writings. That which cannot be communicated, which could never even be fixed and reproduced by any who experienced it, is the peculiar mood into which one was—at times—transported by these living words of his. At such moments the word itself was only the vehicle of a communication, the full import of which was revealed by the

tone of the voice, the radiant eye, the gesture of the speaker; there spoke not only a genius, but an *artistic* genius, and the most successful representations of art were sometimes eclipsed by the magic of his speech. It was for this reason that I compared it to Beethoven's improvisation. No one—not the master himself—could retain the unique impression of his playing or communicate it to the later world. Even a mighty creator cannot give himself entirely; it is not possible for him to give forth all that is in him; we are more likely to find this individual side of his being in his art works, and in those of Wagner as in those of Beethoven moments occur where it seems as if he *must* arise bodily before us . . . yet he does not arise; something ineffable, unnamable, the secret of his personality, has gone with him for ever to the grave. It behoves the biographer of a great man therefore to observe the strictest modesty. What *he* was the world will never know.

Besides Richard Wagner's writings, letters and works, I have obtained my knowledge of him principally from the works of five men. They are: Franz Liszt, Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Friedrich Glasenapp, Hans von Wolzogen and Heinrich von Stein.

About Franz Liszt I shall have much to say later on. Those who wish to know who Wagner was should first enquire of this noble spirit. I am here thinking less of those remarkable writings which laid the foundation of our knowledge of Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, etc., than of his own *attitude* towards Wagner and towards Wagner's cause during forty years. How many fancies of idle heads are refuted by the conduct of this one man! how much do we learn from it of the genius of whom Liszt wrote, "my joy consists in feeling with him, and following him!" Liszt's letters to Wagner, as well as many of his other letters, are another indispensable source for the knowledge of Wagner. Liszt.

The so-called Wagner-literature is well-known to be enormous. Its value however is not at all in proportion to its bulk, and unfortunately corresponds still less to the dignity of the subject. From amidst the sea of mediocrity one small work stands forth conspicuously, and certainly possesses undying classical worth. This is Nietzsche's *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. The pregnant thoughts, the unerring certainty with which everywhere the essential point is brought forward, the epigrammatic conciseness of this little master-work, the noble enthusiasm with which it is pervaded, and the finished beauty of the style, stamp it indisputably as the best that ever came from the pen of this remarkable man. The fact that soon afterwards, when his mind began to be darkened by influences in no way connected with Wagner or Bayreuth, he turned away from the truth which he had so clearly discerned, to issue silly pamphlets full of nauseous trivialities directed against the man whose greatness he had proclaimed in such unrivalled language, must not of course mislead us for a moment. Behind the phantasms which appeared before his great mind in its fearful malady the one form still lived on unclouded in his deepest soul, though not perceptible to his shattered intellect; not long before the final catastrophe Nietzsche Nietzsche.

journeyed to Lucerne, drove out to Triebschen, (where he had known Wagner) and sat there apart by the lake apparently occupied in tracing signs in the sand, but when his companion bent down to look into his face, she saw the tears streaming from his eyes.[1] I shall often have occasion to quote Nietzsche's *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. A perusal of this work is indispensable to all who wish to follow the question to its root.

Friedrich Nietzsche.

Glasenapp. Nothing could show more clearly the unbounded "subjectivism" that lies at the bottom of the everlasting cry for "objectivism," than the manner in which Glasenapp's *Leben Richard Wagner's* has been criticized in some quarters. Glasenapp is an enthusiastic disciple and admirer of Wagner; he makes no secret of it, and so people say at once that his work is not "objective." To me the principal thing in a detailed account of a man's life, that in which its objectiveness consists, appears to be the industry and trustworthiness of the author, and to have nothing to do with the standpoint from which he writes. And in these two respects Glasenapp deserves the highest praise. Those who do not agree with his estimate of Wagner are not obliged to adopt it; the work will still remain, not only the only detailed account of the Meister's life which we possess, but one of the most trustworthy and minutely accurate biographies which German literature has to show. It relies throughout upon original documents and upon a conscientious critical sifting of all the evidence. The first edition of Glasenapp's book appeared in 1876; this already represented the work of many years. In the twenty years which have elapsed since then, the author—who appears as if predestined to this work both by his comprehensive education and more especially by the peculiar qualities of his character and his mind—has never ceased working, collecting and sifting. A second edition was published in 1882; of the third edition, which is greatly enlarged and re-written, the first volume appeared in 1894, so that I have been able to make use of it, and the first half of the second volume in 1896; the rest of the second and the third volumes are to follow soon. To this work of Glasenapp's[2] I would now refer my readers once for all. It is the only complete scientific biography of Richard Wagner that we have, and all who wish to obtain accurate information about

[1] Revue des deux Mondes, 1894, p. 795.

[2] "*Das Leben Richard Wagner's*," 3te Ausgabe. Breitkopf and Härtel. An English translation by William Ashton Ellis is being published by Messrs Kegan Paul & Co. The following valuable works of reference are by the same author. *Wagner Lexicon* (Fundamental conceptions of Wagner's art and philosophy). Cotta 1883. *Wagner Encyclopädie* (a discussion of various subjects by the light of Richard Wagner's philosophy). Fritzsch, 1891.

the particulars of his life *must* turn to it. My own work, the present one, is founded upon Glasenapp, and this in two respects. In the first place all the facts contained in my first chapter have either been taken from Glasenapp or verified by reference to him; only with material which came from other sources and was not confirmed by him, I have stated my authority. I have not thought it necessary to do this every time that I made use of Glasenapp's biography. I do it here explicitly once for all. Secondly the knowledge that everything in Glasenapp's work had been dealt with fully, and was entirely trustworthy, was of great assistance to me in my endeavours to simplify my own work. Hundreds of facts and especially *names* have been omitted from my book. No blame can attach to me for this, for they can all be found in Glasenapp.

H. v. Stein. C. F. Glasenapp. H. v. Wolzogen.

Wolzogen and Stein.

These three, Liszt, Nietzsche, and Glasenapp, I recommend to all my readers to supplement the *biographical* account which he finds here. What the present work owes to Hans von Wolzogen and Heinrich von Stein is not so much biographical material in its limited sense, though it is in a wider sense, in so far as it would have been scarcely possible for me to attain to a full comprehension of Wagner's thoughts and aspirations without the aid of these accomplished authors. Mirrors they are, in a certain sense, reflecting the light which is radiated from the great man. In saying this I mean nothing disparaging to them; quite the contrary. It is a remarkable fact that all Wagner's warmest adherents—with the exception of those executive artists whose art amply makes up for all that they lack in book-learning—have been men whose educational

horizon was of the widest: Liszt, King Ludwig, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Gobineau, Wolzogen, Stein.[1] Each of these names, (and it would be easy to increase the list,) denotes one of those persons who resemble a small microcosm—whether it shows itself in poetic creation, as with Liszt, Baudelaire and Stein, or in any other line of life. Learned, truly learned they all were, filled with that kind of learning which does not consist in the addition of innumerable figures to one another, but in knowledge become flesh and blood, deep conviction and lofty enthusiasm. From them we can learn, if not what genius is, yet what true culture is, for in them "fulness of knowledge" has really become "fulness of understanding." Hans von Wolzogen, who distinguished himself in his earlier life as a student of Germanics and philology, has now for many years devoted himself more and more exclusively to the Wagner cause. It is not necessary to give a list of his numerous writings; they will often be quoted in the further course of this book, and everyone who occupies himself closely with Wagner is sure to know them sooner or later. Heinrich v. Stein, if we except the share which he had in Glasenapp's *Wagner Lexicon*, has written nothing about Wagner or his works, but he is after Nietzsche by far the most important of those who have manifested, or rather *turned to account*, the influence of Richard Wagner's artistic and creative thoughts on various subjects. He died young, at the age of thirty, in 1887; had he lived he would have been counted among the very great ones of his people. His name is now beginning gradually to be known in wider circles—his *Aesthetics of the German classical authors* has been published by the *Reclam Bibliothek*—his *Origin of our modern aestheticism* by Cotta. These are accessible to all, and so are his poems, *Helden und Welt* and *Die Heiligen*. Many more of his writings—philosophical, philological, and critical—are buried in the collections of the Bayreuther Blätter, and are awaiting the day, not far distant, we may hope, when the collected writings of this genuine disciple of Wagner will be given to the world. Finally I must mention this monthly periodical itself, the *Bayreuther Blätter*, as a source of no little importance for the knowledge of Wagner. It was founded in 1878 by Wagner as the "monthly magazine of the Bayreuth Patronatverein," and has from the first been under the editorship of Hans v. Wolzogen, who has continued it since Wagner's death as "a German periodical in the spirit of Richard Wagner." It contains letters, sketches, etc. which have not been included in Wagner's collected writings, and numerous essays concerning his life, his thoughts and his work. The magazine is above all a living witness to the continued influence of Wagner's ideas on every subject.[2]

[1] Grafin Wolkenstein should also be named here.

[2] Of the innumerable other writings about Wagner I will only name Tappert's *Richard Wagner, sein Leben und seine Werke*, Pohl's *Richard Wagner, ein Vortrag*, and Franz Muncker's *Richard Wagner, eine Skizze seines Lebens und Wirkens*. All three may be recommended as a first general introduction. Tappert's treatise is a marvel of conciseness, and is intellectually stimulating. Pohl's discourse is chiefly concerned with questions of art. Muncker's rather more voluminous work

FRANZ LISZT.

The opponents.

As for the countless multitude of criticisms *against* Wagner scattered in various newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, I have been condemned to read a great many of them, and can testify that it is impossible to conceive a greater waste of time. Nothing is to be learned from them in respect of Wagner. That ephemeral newspaper criticisms, even when collected into a book and striving to continue an existence which is both superfluous and illusory, are quite valueless, is obvious. But even the more serious work of such men as Felix Calm, Köstlin, etc., are a desert region. A strange curse of sterility has always rested upon all attempts, even the most meritorious, to write in opposition to Wagner. This is to a great extent due to the prevailing ignorance concerning Wagner's aims and intentions. What Wagner aimed at, what has been called the "Bayreuth idea" is so great and so far removed from the opinions and principles with which we are imbued by our education that it is really not easy to comprehend all at once. In a hundred years perhaps we shall be able to criticize it; in the meantime we ought above all things to learn to understand it. There exists however another class of writers on Wagner, those whose criticism has consisted for the last fifty years in low abuse of the illustrious artist and his endeavours. With regard to them I need only quote the proverb of the ancient sages of India. "The malicious man sees in the possessor of a hundred virtues only his one fault; the hog finds only mud in the pond of lotuses."

Would but the world take Goethe's words to heart concerning this question of criticism: "Before a work comes into existence nobody has any conception of its possibility; once it is there, praise and blame can only be subjective." The same is true of an extraordinary man. Who could have foreseen the possibility of such a man as Richard Wagner in our sober, industrial, scientific century, in our century of great armies of railways and newspapers? Who had any "conception of the possibility" of his new drama, the Word-Tone-Drama? Nobody. *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *die Meistersinger*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, have all, one after the other, been declared *impossible* in the greatest theatres of Germany and by the Areopagus of experts. Who had any "conception of the possibility" of festival performances taking the place of the ordinary happy-go-lucky productions of our usual town repertoire? Nobody! When Wagner tried to institute them in Munich in 1865 the whole country rose against an idea which seemed so insane. Who had a "conception of the possibility" of building a German festival play-house, to which lovers of art should flock in thousands from all ends of the world, in an out-of-the-way provincial town? No one! Who would have believed that at the present time, when money counts for everything, an artist could refuse millions that he might provide his people and the world at large with a home of art, on a foundation of the purest idealism, to the absolute exclusion, on principle, of all idea of pecuniary

is perhaps the most suitable for many, since it treats of the historical and literary part of the subject, from which, without being able to acquire a deep knowledge of Richard Wagner, one may yet form a fair *external* picture of him.

gain.[1] No one! This is now incontestible; all the others were wrong. Even a Liszt at first doubted the possibility of Lohengrin; even a mighty and victorious emperor could not bring himself to believe in the possibility of a festival play-house at Bayreuth.[2] Wagner has proved right; that of which others could form no "conception," he had long ago seen as a living fact within himself. Many of the objects for which he strove extended far beyond the term of his own life, away into the distant future. Is it not for us to reflect over many things which he taught, for which he struggled, and for which he intended that his Bayreuth should be merely the first stone, the foundation? And will it not be well for us to consider, whether what seems impossible may not yet be possible? We can form no "conception," for instance, of the leading part which, according to Wagner's conviction, will belong to pure, genuine, uncommercial art in benefitting human society, but the recognition of our own incapacity in this respect does not help us much. With Wagner, as with Goethe, we learn of what very secondary importance is "conceptual" thinking. The conception is, and always must be, traceable back to an experience, to something which has once been *seen;* but what Wagner aims at, the great idea of "regeneration" which runs through his whole life, he sees as the artist sees his unfinished work, of which before it is actually there, "no one has any conception" that it is possible. Like his own Wotan he can say of himself:

> "Doch was noch nie sich traf
> Danach trachtet mein Sinn!"

And just as little does it follow that, because we can often form no distinct logical conception of Wagner's teachings, of which I have given a short résumé in the last section of this book, under the heading "the Bayreuth idea," they may not still express a truth. That would be to deny the possibility of all new life. On the contrary, I believe that many who trust themselves unreservedly to the leading of his great and lofty mind, who follow the course of Wagner's thought to its deepest depths, where it most diverges from the trodden path, and have consequently received the mighty impression of his art in all its fulness, will in time become convinced of the truth of Nietzsche's words when he says, that Wagner is not only a great artist, but that "he is one of the very great powers of civilization." But to manifest itself as a power, the thought must first establish itself in the hearts of others.

The German Drama.

This remark of Nietzsche's, however, has in it something one-sided, and already betrays the morbid tendency of his penetrating mind. He could see in the brightest light what was hidden from others, but he was himself dazzled by the light. He would have been nearer to the truth, and would have expressed a far grander thought, if he had written: Wagner *serves* a great power of civilization. Wagner has often been compared to a meteor; there is not an

[1] *Cf.* chap. iv., the section on the festival plays.
[2] *Cf.* p. 65 and the Index.

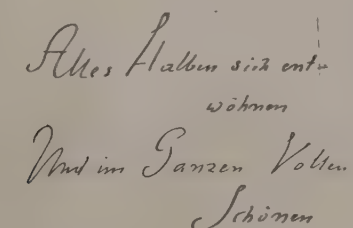
atom of truth in this simile. In the course of the last few centuries a "great power of civilization" has arisen—along a very different path to the bloody one of political history—that is *German art.* The soul of this art is music; its necessary, most perfect form, the drama. The Germans have, partly owing to the geographical position of their country, partly, and more especially, to their own powers of assimilation, received artistic impressions from every side, which they have industriously worked up; but a race so peculiarly constituted, and so unrivalled in its own special domain, was never intended merely to copy the Greeks, the Italians, the French and the English. The German had to find his own special art, one which had never been known before, born of an inner necessity, and of his own special capabilities, an art which should truly and perfectly reflect his soul. But the highest art is not conceivable without the word; the poet is prince amongst the artists; the others only obey him, even where they seem to create independently. This was true even with the Greeks, who lived almost entirely through the *eye*; how much more is it true of the Germans, for whom the *thought* denotes just what the sight denoted for the Hellenes! Would it be possible that the longings of the Germans for an art of their own should be satisfied only by music? That would be much the same as if the Greeks had tried to make works or plastic art—graceful, grand, monstrous forms of every kind—out of their own consciousness, without their foundation, without the all-powerful co-operation of the only creative force in art—namely poetry. The German people has long ago acknowledged that its greatest poets are its musicians; they alone have something quite of their own, incomparable, exclusively German;—no other productions come up to those of a Bach or of a Beethoven. With the poets of German literature, on the other hand, what attracts us most has always been their personality. A Sophocles, a Shakespeare found a form ready to hand, in which they could at once produce the most perfect creations possible to the genius of their people. It was not so with Goethe and Schiller. They had to try every kind of form—antique and modern—and in their daily lives we find them continually busied in seeking for an art, which they long for, and are every moment hoping to grasp. This is the new, distinctive, incomparable *German Drama.* This drama could only be achieved by the musician, for only in music does the soul of the German attain its fullest expression. Not only *could* a German musician do this, but he *had* to do it; for just as the poet was despairing because he could not find the proper "expression," so the musician too was despairing, because after he had brought this "expression" to its highest perfection, he was unable to use it in fashioning a poem which should be thinkable, visible, and unmistakably intelligible. This problem was solved, and with it the problem of the German Drama, directly the musician realized that music can assume bodily form only in the Drama. In the section on Wagner's art teaching, I have tried to show how the poets and the musicians of Germany were equally in search of a new, all-embracing art form, and how the new drama grew out of the inner necessity, and the richest capabilities of *all* these

great men, not out of the arbitrary *fiat* of a single individual. Both, the necessity and the capability, were united in the heart and the head of the poet-musician Richard Wagner. One of the greatest things in Wagner appears to me to be the absence of everything fortuitous and arbitrary about him. He could not have been other than he was; his dramatic ideal was the logical outcome of the whole past. We shall see in the course of this book that logical development is besides highly characteristic of Wagner's own artistic productivity. This fact again is one which should confirm our faith in Wagner. His own strong individuality is controlled and dominated by something *unindividual, historical.* That power of civilization of which Nietzsche speaks, has been the slow growth of centuries; it has been nourished from a hundred roots and is in a certain sense embodied in this man. A close study of Wagner's art and of his philosophy is therefore of far-reaching interest.

To the reader.

I would now ask the earnest reader of my book to follow the life work of Wagner and to listen to his words with frank and sincere sympathy. Carlyle has already taught us that this is the only way to learn his *secret*, and to learn the secret of a Richard Wagner is to enrich one's own life. Even though we may think that here or there he has erred, though we seem to have discovered that even his wide intellect was subject to those limitations which hedge in every individuality, thus giving it its own peculiar physiognomy, but which still cannot be regarded as limitations, is that a reason for us to remain blind to the fact that we can also learn from a man of such pre-eminent intellectual greatness, even when he errs? And who is the man who asserts that Richard Wagner erred? What Wagner has *done* we know; his work testifies for him, and inspires confidence in his judgment; let his opponent show *his* deeds; then will we gladly listen to him. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Richard Wagner once wrote to Liszt, "When one sees how few things can hold their ground; when we meet again and again with the same craze for superficiality, the same incredible frivolity and morbid love of pleasure, one's own earnestness often appears in a very comical light." And yet it is in this spirit of earnestness that the present book has been written and is now offered to those who are desirous to strive with the author after "fulness of understanding."



First Chapter

Richard Wagner's Life

Full measure and full scope
His life twofold did bless:
In suffering, in success.

GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG.

Introduction

> Not to discover what is new, but to see what has been discovered with my own eyes.
>
> Goethe.

The Scheme.

Richard Wagner's excellent biographer, Karl Friedrich Glasenapp, requires no less than four octavo volumes, each containing four or five hundred pages of pretty close print, to relate the events of Wagner's life, and has certainly not gone too much into detail. Few artists have had such an eventful life, and in this, as in many other points, Wagner resembles the Italian painters of the best period. Through his veins flows a blood hot and impetuous, such as is seldom to be found in a Northerner. He pursued his end from town to town and from country to country. To-day a conductor in a German "provincial slough"—to-morrow at the point of destitution in the great city of Paris. To-day a court-official of the King of Saxony—to-morrow a fugitive in a strange country with a warrant of arrest against him; to-day without a single ray of hope, but one step removed from death in sheer despair—to-morrow the declared friend and protégé of a mighty monarch; to-day buried in the deepest solitude of the Alps, fleeing from the world, and living for his art alone—to-morrow the builder of the Bayreuth festival-house, receiving emperors and kings as his guests, and surrounded by enthusiastic multitudes assembled from every part of the world. Wagner's life is itself an exciting drama; not a year passes that is not full of interesting events.

The limits, as well as the whole plan, of the present work prevent me from giving a detailed account of all those events; I intend therefore to give something

quite different, namely a sketch, a drawing in outline. That can only be done by following a course essentially different to that of chronology.[1] In a short and concise chronological account there would remain nothing but names and dates; it would be a mere skeleton. An outline drawing, however, may indicate the characteristic features of a strongly marked individuality in a few strokes—as is proved by the sketches of all great painters. Perhaps it will be found that the sketch, just because it has to neglect so many external details, is able to present the inner life, the *essential* part (as Schopenhauer expresses it) with all the more force.[2]

But here we have to do, not with the eye, not with an organ which is able to perceive the complex lines of a drawing as a united whole, but with the reason. We must therefore start with unity as a form, that is, as a *formula;* for reason has something geometrical, a tendency to regularity in its way of constructing. Any variations which we may discover later on will still be intelligible, if they are only reducible to an original "scheme," which is fixed, once for all. Is not actual life, in its purely external course, in a certain sense a scheme, in which the individuality utters itself, not in its own unclouded nature, but in accordance with the *type* which surrounding circumstances have impressed upon it? The schematic method of treatment is therefore not without a certain inner justification.

I intend in this Introduction to offer a very simple scheme by which the reader may obtain a convenient preliminary survey of Wagner's life. I purposely call it a *scheme*, in order to emphasize the fact that such a reduction of the endlessly complex threads of life to a few simple lines is a more or less arbitrary operation of the reason. In the succeeding sections of the chapter I shall enter more into particulars, whereby the scheme will lose its sharp corners and become recognizable in its real nature, as a mere instrument for the construction of the image.

General symmetry of Wagner's life.

The less we load our memories with dates and names, the more vividly will the picture form itself in our minds. A single date, and a single number will for the present suffice to give a preliminary view of Wagner's life. Both the number and the date happen to be such that they impress themselves easily upon the memory at once, without any particular mnemotechnical artifice.

In the year of Germany's liberation from a foreign yoke, the year of the great "*Völkerschlacht*," the battle of Leipzig, 1813, Wagner, the most German of all artists was born. At that time the foreign enemy was driven from the soil of the fatherland, but his spirit still continued to rule mightily in Germany.

[1] A chronological table of the principal events of Wagner's life will be found in the appendix to this chapter.

[2] "To the inessential part of life belongs the exact determination of the events and actions, the material in which the empirical character shows itself. . . . So for example it is inessential whether a man plays for nuts or for crowns; whether he cheats or plays honestly, *that* is essential." (Schopenhauer.)

No one has struggled more resolutely than Wagner against the spell, which was not to be broken by cannons, and which rested as a curse especially upon the German theatre. Now-a-days German art—German poetry, German music, and above all, the German drama—are pre-eminent in the whole world; every year countless thousands make their way from every corner of the world to Germany for the sake of its art, and the French themselves are the most ardent enthusiasts for Bayreuth. Leader and conqueror in this second *Völkerschlacht*, or battle of nations, is Richard Wagner.

To forget the year of Wagner's birth—1813—is therefore impossible; one has only to remember that *he*, the one who was destined to lead German art to victory, was born in the year in which the enemy was vanquished by German arms, and herewith the foundation laid of Germany's future greatness.

The Psalmist says in a well-known verse: "the days of our years are threescore years and ten," and Wagner's life lasted exactly seventy years.

The year 1813 and the number 70 therefore give the abstract form of "Wagner in time," if I may so speak. Not only do they give us the initial and final points—1813 and 1883—but we obtain from both a third decisive date.

For it so happened that Wagner's life consisted of two symmetrical, and exactly equal parts. Just thirty-five years after his birth, and thirty-five years before his death, an incisive and decisive change took place in his circumstances, permanently affecting both the external features of his future destiny and the utterances of his inner being in many essential respects; the division of Wagner's life into two equal epochs can scarcely be called artificial, so exactly does it answer to the outward events and inner course of his development. The change occurred, as has been said, precisely at the middle of his life—in his six-and-thirtieth year therefore.

On May 9th, 1849, Wagner had to flee from Dresden, where he was *Hof-Kapellmeister*, and shortly afterwards from Germany, to live for many years in a strange country, with a warrant against him as a "politically dangerous individual." His banishment from Germany is the visible line dividing the two halves of his life. In this scheme I must leave all inner processes of development out of account; they would only be misleading: external, visible facts suffice to divide the two halves of Wagner's life from each other, and in this respect we shall find that one point possesses special importance.

Up to that date, May 9th 1849, Wagner had lived, as we all do, accepting society as he found it, and had at twenty years of age chosen as his profession that of a musical conductor, in which he attained the honourable position of a *Hof-Kapellmeister*. After that 9th of May 1849, Wagner never occupied any official post, and this on principle. He himself writes: "I turned my back decisively on a world to which in my inmost being I had long ceased to belong" (iv. 406). In what sense these words are to be understood will come to light gradually in the course of our story. For the present they suffice to show that he withdrew from public official life of set purpose, and not from any freak of

destiny, or caprice of his own. It was with full consciousness of his act that Wagner turned his back upon society, especially upon our modern public art; if he would preserve his own independence he could no longer eat its salt. To influence it as he wished, it was necessary to be outside it; he recognized that only by ceasing to use his musical abilities as a handicraft could he hope to devote them to the service of his poetic invention;—in short, his retirement from public life as a professional musician expresses a decisive moment, and we are distinctly justified in retaining, as a part of our scheme, an external fact, in which an inner process of his development is so clearly reflected.

Wagner's life begins then in the year 1813, it lasts seventy years, and is made up of two equal epochs, externally and internally differing from each other in essential respects.

Detailed division.

Besides the division into two parts, his life shows a further very curious symmetry in its details. Now that we have a clear perception of its course *in time*, we are able, without going far out of our way, to bring it before us and impress it upon our minds *in space*.

Each half of his life can be divided into four periods, according to the places in which he successively lived. The periods are not of equal length, but they have the advantage for the imagination and for the memory, that each single period of the second epoch runs parallel to the corresponding one in the first, and contrasts with it.

In the first half we may distinguish the following four periods: I. 1813-1833. Residence in his narrower Saxon home (Dresden and Leipzig); it is the period of early youth, during which the elements of artistic utterance are acquired and the first attempts in poetry and music are made—choice of opera as a profession. II. 1833-1839. First wanderings—entry into public life—acts as a conductor in several provincial theatres in Germany (Würzburg, Magdeburg, Königsberg, Riga)—learns the practical technique of the theatre. III. 1839-1842. First voluntary residence in a foreign country (Paris)—vain struggles to make his way in the great city. IV. 1842-1849. Dresden—engaged as *Hof-Kapellmeister* (*i.e.* conductor at a court theatre) at one of the first theatres of Germany.

In the second half we may distinguish the following four periods: I. 1849-1859. Banished from his native country—resident in Zurich—commencement of his full, conscious maturity as a man—writes the books which are the foundation of his art-doctrine (*Oper und Drama*, etc.)—final retirement from the operatic stage. II. 1859-1866. Second wanderings—performance of his works on the stages of several large towns (Paris, Vienna, Munich)—driven by necessity to make endeavours to resume his connection with the modern stage. III. 1866-1872. Second voluntary residence in a foreign country (Triebschen, near Lucerne)—entire seclusion from the world. IV. 1872-1883. Bayreuth—building of the festival play-house—founding of the German festival plays.

Limits of the scheme.

I think this division speaks for itself, and scarcely requires a commentary. It only remains for me to repeat that the scheme is expressly intended to relate

exclusively to external facts. The dates and the places of residence form, so to speak, the abscissae and the ordinates of the complex curve of life. But the most superficial consideration of the question will show how closely these external divisions correspond to inner processes, inasmuch as each change is the result of an act of Wagner's own free will. But it must not be overlooked that these acts of the will are mere symptoms, and that there could be nothing more preposterous than to separate the act from its slowly-matured motives. To attempt to give a schematic view of a man's intellectual development would be simple madness.

It would, for instance, be wrong to lay special stress upon the fact that in each period of Wagner's early life two works were composed for the stage; in the first a great tragedy and a pastoral play, in the second *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot*, in the third *Rienzi* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*, in the fourth *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. It is interesting for mnemotechnical reasons to know this, but many of the works—*e.g. Lohengrin*—had lived in the imagination of the author for years before he wrote them. Amidst the inextricable tangle of influences at work no one could find out the cause which most contributed to its appearing in the particular year 1847. It is not even always possible to distinguish cause and effect from one another. *Rienzi* for instance one might suppose to have been influenced directly by his experiences at the Paris *Grand Opéra*, but in fact Rienzi was half finished when he first went to Paris. In the second half of his life such unauthorized attempts would lead still more astray. For example, if one tried to connect *Tristan* with the first, *Die Meistersinger* with the second, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* with the third, *Parsifal* with the fourth period, it is true that the dates of completion of these works would afford some justification to such a view. But in reality the composition of each of them was spread over a number of years: *Die Meistersinger* from 1845-1867, *Der Nibelungenring* from 1848-1874, *Parsifal* from 1854-1882. Only *Tristan* was written within one period, 1854-1859.

Let the scheme therefore be taken for what it is—a convenient means of obtaining a preliminary survey of Wagner's life and of fixing it in the memory.

First Epoch

1813-1849

Power is the moral law of men who are distinguished above others, and it is mine.

BEETHOVEN.

1. 1813-1833.

The Family.

THE HOUSE IN WHICH WAGNER WAS BORN.

RICHARD WAGNER was born on May 22nd, 1813, in Leipzig.

His biographer has succeeded in tracing his ancestry back to the year 1643. From this we learn that the family was Saxon from the first. Up to the present century no member of it had travelled beyond the narrow limits of his fatherland. His ancestors, up to the second generation before Richard Wagner, were parochial schoolmasters and organists. His grandfather however enjoyed a complete academical education, and studied theology in Leipzig; but finding himself unfitted for clerical life he became an official in the Customs Department. In connection with the scientific doctrine of heredity in the second generation, it

would be interesting to be able to say something about this Gottlob Friedrich Wagner; but unfortunately we have been able to discover nothing more than that he made an early and happy marriage, that he "possessed an education extending far beyond the horizon of an official of those times," and that he gave his two sons an excellent bringing up. About these two sons—Friedrich and Adolf—our information is much more complete.

The elder brother, Friedrich Wagner, Richard Wagner's father, after studying jurisprudence in Leipzig, followed his father's profession, and entered the Government Service, in which he rose to a very respectable position. How far his intellectual horizon extended beyond that of a mere actuary in a *Stadtgericht* is sufficiently proved by his extensive and varied private library, in which especially classical literature was well represented. But the most remarkable thing about him is his enthusiastic love of the theatre. His many duties as an official can scarcely have left him much leisure to devote to the theatrical art, but he had a passion for it which was more than that of a dilettante. The first performance, for instance, of a new play by Schiller continued to be celebrated every year as a family festival; actors were his most intimate friends at home, and he himself had appeared with some success in good amateur performances. In Richard Wagner's father we thus find a strongly marked natural leaning to the stage, which, remarkable in itself, became all the more important for his children in consequence of his early death. He died on November 22nd 1813, exactly six months after the birth of his son Richard, and very soon afterwards his widow married Ludwig Geyer, a successful actor of that time, and one of the best friends of her first husband. It was Friedrich Wagner who had first induced Geyer to become an actor, and thus, through a peculiar concatenation of circumstances, Wagner owed it to his father that when he first awakened to consciousness he found himself surrounded by the world of the theatre.

To Ludwig Geyer I shall return directly. First I must say a few words about Richard Wagner's uncle, Adolf Wagner. He is of especial interest to us in two ways;—first as partaking in a pre-eminent degree of the remarkable talent which distinguishes the family, and secondly because he exerted a beneficial influence on the education of his nephew at the most critical time, that of his last years at school, and at the university.

The name of Adolf Wagner is known in the history of German literature: but little more than the name. He was a man of immense learning and untiring industry; that he was not wanting in creative power is proved by several of his literary attempts. But with all his astonishing versatility he lacked the necessary concentration, and his nature was too artistically receptive for him to be able to preserve his own individuality intact in the midst of so many external influences. A comparison with Herder will make this clear. That Herder, in spite of his encyclopedian versatility, yet appears as a sharply defined figure, is due to a kind of self-assertiveness, springing from an egoistic, not fully artistic temperament, and maintained even towards the highest genius; by this means the equilibrium

is restored; when we see a man, gifted with the keenest intuition for the souls of the most distant peoples, yet often remaining blind to the intellectual greatness of those around him, it is evident that we behold the drawbacks of a remarkable individuality, conscious of its own value. Adolf Wagner lacked this strong backbone; he mistook nothing; he understood everything, from the ancient Greek tragedy to Burns and Byron, from the abstract metaphysics of Giordano Bruno to the history of painting. The infinite capacity of his artistic heart, the wide range of his intellect, included everything in its sympathetic embrace. His own per-

Adolf Wagner.

sonality was obscured by this process, and thus we see him employed chiefly in work for its own sake, in erudite editions, commentaries and translations.[1]

[1] Of his own numerous writings, which extend over the most various fields, from essays on the Greek poets down to novels and comedies, the most important seem to be his *Biographien der Reformatoren* and his study *Zwei Epochen der Modernen Poesie* (a parallel between Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio on the one hand, and Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland on the other). He was also an industrious contributor to the first edition of Brockhaus' Encyclopedia. His translations extend from Sophocles and Cæsar to Lange's History of Painting. His complete edition of the works of Giordano Bruno in the original languages (Latin and Italian) is celebrated. The Italian classics he has edited under the title *Parnasso Italiano*. To him too we owe the first complete edition of the poems of Robert Burns in English.

RICHARD WAGNER'S MOTHER.

Nevertheless he is an interesting person, especially because of his near relationship to the man who possessed an equally universal intellect united to a creative gift such as is possessed only by the few greatest men of all times. It is remarkable too that (according to the literary historian Kurz) the best of Adolf Wagner's own works are his comedies, so that his talent too lies in the direction of the stage. Possibly Richard Wagner's attitude of protest against the disgraceful state of modern art had its first origin in his old uncle's *Theater und Publikum.*

Of Wagner's mother I have little to relate. She was an excellent woman and an excellent mother, and was idolized by her son Richard;[1] the memory of her and of her motherly affection strengthened him in all the storms of his life; on the very evening before his death he was speaking of her. All who knew her mention her in sympathetic words. After the death of her second husband, Ludwig Geyer, her house still remained the centre of a little circle of artists and lovers of art. We may well suppose that the simple woman possessed a charm that was all her own. Her portrait expresses grace, wit, and good judgment.

Ludwig Geyer married the widowed mother in 1814, and thenceforward supplied the place of little Richard's father. He was in every respect worthy of the warm friendship which Friedrich Wagner had felt for him. In obedience to the wish of his father, Geyer had studied law, but after that he followed his own bent and became a painter and an actor. As a portrait painter he acquired such fame that he was engaged to paint the royal families in Munich and in Dresden. As an actor he was especially remarkable for the versatility of his talent; on every German stage he was a welcome guest. Eventually Geyer's talent for singing was discovered by Carl Maria v. Weber, who liked him to sing in his operas. He also wrote comedies with some success.[2] For us the interest of this amiable and accomplished man lies chiefly in the fact of his marriage with Richard Wagner's mother, in consequence of which the future *Meister* was from the first surrounded by theatrical life.

First impressions.

It will be remembered that Friedrich Wagner, Richard Wagner's father, had grown up amongst Government officials. His passion for the stage had come to show itself by degrees; the son, on the other hand, owing to his relationship with the actor Geyer, almost literally grew up on the stage. At an age when other children scarcely know what a theatre is, Richard Wagner frequented it regularly. If his mother wanted to keep him at home in the evening to do his lessons, he wept until he had got leave to run off to the theatre. Geyer in fact was so pleased with the little art-enthusiast that he liked to take him to the rehearsals. His parents' house too was mostly frequented by actors, and the stage was a constant subject of conversation. Practical experience is said to be the most indispensable thing for a theatrical

[1] See the beautiful letter to his mother in Tappert, p. 72.

[2] His *Bethlehemitischer Kindermord* has lately been published in Reclam's Universalbibliothek.

poet; I know of no dramatist who began to gather practical experience so early as Wagner; especially I know of no poet whose attention was engaged so decidedly and so uninterruptedly with the theatre from the very first awakening of consciousness as was Wagner's. At the end of 1821 Geyer died. Richard was then only eight and a half years old, but the influences which I have just spoken of were scarcely, if at all, affected by his death, for Wagner's brother Albert, who was fourteen years his senior (born 1799) and fully shared the Wagnerian passion for the theatre, had already thrown his medical studies overboard and turned actor and singer; his sisters, Rosalie (born 1803), Louise (born 1805), Klara (born 1807) were also on the stage; moreover all the truest and most truly disinterested friends of the twice orphaned children were Geyer's brother-artists.

The earliest, most enduring, and most remarkable impression of the first twenty years of his life, and the one which is of most importance for his whole future, is therefore his close contact and connection with the theatre.

Less striking, but still worthy of note, is another circumstance. Of all the really great masters of the musical art Wagner is the only one who enjoyed a thorough classical education.

The labour of mastering the technical apparatus of music is so great, especially when, as is usually the case, the musician has also to be a finished performer on one or more instruments, that nearly all great composers have been sons of executive musicians, because they alone concentrate the powers and the attention of their children from their earliest years upon the acquisition of technical skill; without this even the most gifted genius can never attain that degree of mechanical virtuosity without which he would earn neither his livelihood nor recognition in the world. Nobody will think the worse of a Bach, a Mozart, or a Beethoven because their general education was scanty; nevertheless we cannot help feeling that these great artists are to some extent excluded from the pale of the highest culture by this circumstance, and forced to remain within their own limited domain of music. This fact was most painfully felt, and had especially fatal consequences for art, directly composers were led, in the necessary course of musical evolution, to the drama. How differently would a Mozart have chosen his subjects if he had possessed a wide education! With what authority would he have laid down the law to wretched hack librettists —if indeed he had required librettists at all!

Richard Wagner enjoyed essentially the same kind of education as, for instance, Goethe and Schiller. When Wagner's mother married Ludwig Geyer, the family moved to Dresden, where Geyer was permanently engaged at the theatre. After Geyer's death they returned to their home in Leipzig. In Dresden Wagner attended the celebrated old *Kreuzschule;* in Leipzig the *Nicolaigymnasium.* He then matriculated at the Leipzig university as a student of music and philosophy. Such a programme denotes, not precisely a learned education, but a thorough and wide one. The course of his studies derives

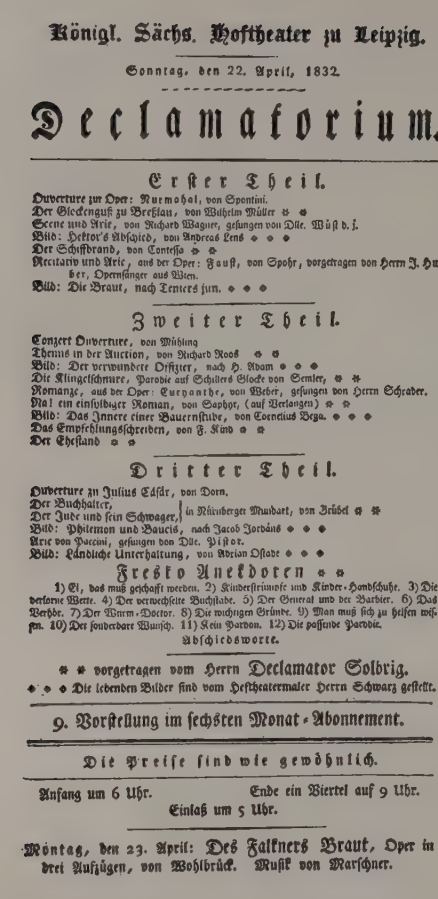
special interest from the fact that Wagner, who was no infant-prodigy in other respects, displayed in the very first years of his school life an unusual talent for the classical languages, so that his teachers looked upon him as a born philologian. A born *wielder of languages* he certainly was. This love for classic antiquity, by which I mean especially Greek language and poetry, and for the study of languages in general, Wagner retained throughout his life. Whoever has had the opportunity of examining that most eloquent testimony to the

Ludwig Geyer.

universality of Wagner's mind, the library at Wahnfried, will have remarked that the science of language was his favourite study until his death.[1]

The full import of his early acquaintance with the authors of classic

[1] I commend this fact especially to the attention of those who imagine, often in consequence of their own imperfect literary knowledge, that they can speak of the language of Wagner's poems with a certain tone of disparagement.



Königl. Sächs. Hoftheater zu Leipzig.

Sonntag, den 22. April, 1832.

Declamatorium.

Erster Theil.

Ouverture zur Oper: Numahal, von Spontini.
Der Glockenguß zu Breslau, von Wilhelm Müller ✲ ✲
Scene und Arie, von Richard Wagner, gesungen von Dlle. Wüst d. j.
Bild: Hektor's Abschied, von Andreas Lens ✲ ✲ ✲
Der Schiffbrand, von Contessa ✲ ✲
Recitativ und Arie, aus der Oper: Faust, von Spohr, vorgetragen von Herrn J. Huber, Opernsänger aus Wien.
Bild: Die Braut, nach Teniers jun. ✲ ✲ ✲

Zweiter Theil.

Concert Ouverture, von Mühling
Thenus in der Auction, von Richard Roos ✲ ✲
Bild: Der verwundete Offizier, nach H. Vdam ✲ ✲ ✲
Die Klingelschnure, Parodie auf Schillers Glocke von Semler, ✲ ✲
Romanze, aus der Oper: Euryanthe, von Weber, gesungen von Herrn Schrader.
Na! ein einsilbiger Roman, von Saphyr, (auf Verlangen) ✲ ✲
Bild: Das Innere einer Bauernstube, von Cornelius Bega. ✲ ✲ ✲
Das Empfehlungsschreiben, von F. Kind ✲ ✲
Der Ehestand ✲ ✲

Dritter Theil.

Ouverture zu Julius Cäsar, von Dorn.
Der Buchhalter,
Der Jude und sein Schwager, } in Nürnberger Mundart, von Zrübel ✲ ✲
Bild: Philemon und Baucis, nach Jacob Jordans ✲ ✲ ✲
Arie von Puccini, gesungen von Dlle. Pistor.
Bild: Ländliche Unterhaltung, von Adrian Ostade ✲ ✲ ✲

Fresko Anekdoten ✲ ✲

1) Ei, das muß geschafft werden. 2) Kinderstrümpfe und Kinder-Handschuhe. 3) Die verlorne Wette. 4) Der verwechselte Buchstabe. 5) Der General und der Barbier. 6) Das Verhör. 7) Der Wurm-Doctor. 8) Die wichtigen Gründe. 9) Man muß sich zu helfen wissen. 10) Der sonderbare Wunsch. 11) Kein Pardon. 12) Die passende Parodie.

Abschiedsworte.

✲ ✲ vorgetragen vom Herrn Declamator Solbrig.
✲ ✲ ✲ Die lebenden Bilder sind vom Hoftheatermaler Herrn Schwarz gestellt.

9. Vorstellung im sechsten Monat-Abonnement.

Die Preise sind wie gewöhnlich.

Anfang um 6 Uhr. Ende ein Viertel auf 9 Uhr.
Einlaß um 5 Uhr.

Montag, den 23. April: Des Falkners Braut, Oper in drei Aufzügen, von Wohlbrück. Musik von Marschner.

antiquity will be felt when we regard it in the light of the other determining influence of his life—his early familiarity with the theatre. It was the *dramatic* authors—Aeschylos and Sophocles—who engaged the boy's attention, and at thirteen Wagner learned English on his own account, in order to read Shakespeare in the original. The child who had grown up on the stage at once comprehended a Sophocles and a Shakespeare, if not in their deepest, yet in their truest meaning; not as ornaments of literature, but as stage poets, as artistic creators, who could only be fully understood from the standpoint of the stage. For him these men were not distant objects, to be wondered at and philologically *commented* upon; rather what they said was for him the nearest, the most intelligible thing in the world. Another result of his early and intimate acquaintance with the greatest of dramatists was the habit of idealizing his own childish impressions of the theatre; they showed him dimly that the stage was a measureless artistic force, and contained the possibility of the very highest within itself.

Looking back at these first twenty years, which were of such decisive importance, we shall see that his own brilliant gifts were seconded in the most remarkable way by external circumstances; his early acquaintance with the theatre, the intercourse with theatrical artists, the enduring impression of Carl Maria v. Weber's conducting, the singing lessons of his sisters, the daily visits to his stepfather's studio, the constant alternation between reading dramatic masterpieces and the very good representations of the works of Shakespeare, Schiller and Goethe, as well as those of Iffland, Kotzebue and other less important authors; later too the frequent and excellent musical performances in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and the stimulating society of his learned uncle, Adolf Wagner, who had mastered nearly the whole literature of the world, who was himself a theatrical poet, and held very strong views about the reform of our theatres—all this combined to form and stimulate his mind with impressions purely and entirely artistic.

First essays in art.

I shall speak more fully of his artistic development during this youthful period in my third chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that Wagner was a

poet from the beginning, a poet in words and in tones; that he regarded himself from the very first as, beyond all doubt, destined solely and entirely for an artistic career, that of the stage, and that from this belief he never swerved either to the right or to the left, nor ever took any other possibility into account.

When only twelve years old he composed a prize poem which was printed at the instance of his teachers at the Kreuzschule. At this time he began to write tragedies. His musical gift too was awakened under the impression of Weber's music, and soon afterwards by the mightier influence of Beethoven. At sixteen he tried his hand in a "pastoral play," in which he wrote *words and music together*. This led to more serious studies, specially musical, which he underwent with Weinlig the *Cantor* of the *Thomas-schule* during his student-time. As exercises in the handling of the musical apparatus he composed quite a number of compositions, mostly for full orchestra (a symphony, overtures, &c.). Several of these were performed in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, not without success. These compositions and performances belong to the years between 1830 and 1832. In the beginning of 1832 we see our artist, now aged nineteen, already returning to his own proper field, the stage, with a *Scena and Aria;* it was performed in the Leipzig Court theatre, and in the summer of 1832 he made the sketch of an opera, *Die Hochzeit*, which was never completed.

Soon afterwards he entered upon his practical theatrical career as chorus director, and wrote his first work for the stage, *Die Feen.*

2. 1833-1839.

Würzburg.

It was a fortunate circumstance for Richard Wagner, that when he attained an age at which he could commence his practical career, his brother Albert held a post as actor, singer, and stage-manager at the Würzburg theatre. Richard went there on his brother's invitation in January 1833 to earn his first experience as director of choruses. Here, at the very outset of his career, he displayed that restless activity which distinguished him until his death; he is an example of Hobbes' assertion that three quarters of genius is industry. Besides his duties on the stage, we hear of his composing additional pieces for his brother to insert in his parts, and assisting at the *Musikverein;* above all the words and the music

Albert Wagner.

of his first great opera, *Die Feen*, were composed during these few months at Würzburg.

Wagner's nearest relations.

This occasion of his brother Albert doing him a real service in inviting him to Würzburg affords me an opportunity of saying a few words regarding Richard Wagner's relations to his brothers and sisters and the other members of his family.

In reality none of his immediate kinsfolk play any real part in his life, or at least none that is sufficient to entitle them to special consideration on the part of the world in general. They never showed any true appreciation of his genius, and

Rosalie Wagner.

it is probably for this reason that in the many hours of bitter want which Wagner endured in later years, they never accorded him that active assistance which might have entitled them to a share in his glory. A single bright exception is his eldest sister, Rosalie Wagner. In the story of Richard Wagner her name deserves to be written in golden letters. A highly gifted actress, and a lovable woman, she was perhaps the first of all human beings to whom the greatness of Richard Wagner was revealed; be this as it may, she used the privilege of a sister; she loved her brother, she supported him, she inspired him with courage,

and when others laughed sceptically, her faith remained unshaken. But this generous friend died in 1837. Wagner was connected with the Brockhaus family of publishers through two of his sisters; they were often in a position to render him real service, but unfortunately the great firm neglected the opportunity of earning undying fame; at a later date it even allowed the pages of its celebrated *Konversations Lexikon* to be employed in spreading untrue reports, against which Wagner had to enter public protest. In spite of this he remained firmly attached to his sisters, especially to Ottilie Brockhaus. To his half-sister Cäcilie Geyer—afterwards married to the publisher Avenarius—he was bound by pleasant recollections of early childhood and of Paris, but in no case do we find a closer community of feeling, at least with reference to the great works of his life. Only with his nieces, Johanna and Franziska Wagner—the daughters of his brother Albert—does Wagner seem to have felt any real bond of unity; but even the celebrated singer, Johanna Jachmann-Wagner had but a very superficial feeling for her great uncle; the true blood of an artist flowed in her veins; in Elisabeth, and in other parts her performance was unrivalled, but the great poet was and remained a stranger to her. We can understand Wagner's admission in the fifties that he was indifferent to the whole family. "Almost the only exception is Franziska," he says himself. This excellent actress, Franziska Wagner, later the wife of the composer Alexander Ritter, is perhaps the only member of the family who followed the career of her great kinsman with real intelligence and sympathy; but circumstances did not allow her to play any part in his life.

Years of wandering.

In January 1834 Wagner returned from Würzburg to Leipzig. He had finished *Die Feen* on the first day of the new year. In his native town, where his first attempts had been received in such a friendly spirit, he hoped to get this, his first opera, accepted. Fortune seemed to smile on him; not only did his sister Rosalie, who was then engaged at the *Stadttheater*, along with many other friends, speak in his behalf, but the attention of several influential literary men, among them Heinrich Laube, was attracted to his extraordinary talent, and they supported him in the papers. The director of the theatre was himself not unwilling to accept the work for representation. But here, with his very first work for the stage, his path was beset with the inexorable fate which pursued him throughout his life. It at once took a form characteristic of his entire career: the stage manager, Franz Hauser, a friend of Mendelssohn's, condemned the work, because "the whole tendency was distasteful to him," and declared as a reason for this opinion of his, which was decisive, that Wagner displayed "complete ignorance of the way to handle his resources," and that with him "nothing was to be found which was wrung from the heart." Literally the same objections which at that time were still made in those very circles against Wagner's great prototype Beethoven! Hauser's opinion of Wagner's objectionable tendency reminds us of Mendelssohn's remark[1]

[1] *Cf.* the work of Mendelssohn's bosom friend A. B. Marx: *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, ii. 135.

about the ninth symphony: "*Sie macht mir kein Plaisir.*"[1] *Die Feen*, a work full of deep poetic and musical beauties, warmed with the life-blood of this youth of twenty years, was not performed.

Under the impression of this first bitter disappointment Wagner journeyed (end of July 1834) to Magdeburg, where he had been engaged as Conductor. There he remained till the spring of 1836, when the theatre became insolvent. Here, in this extraordinary theatre, the director of which was "in a state of perennial bankruptcy", Wagner first had an opportunity of exercising his unusual talent for conducting on a more extended scale, and he was also able to exert an influence on the *mise-en-scène* of the numerous operas which were put upon the stage; his success is attested by the newspapers of those days. A single performance of a second work which he had composed in the meantime—*Das Liebesverbot*—was less successful; the company was just in process of being dissolved. In their love for the *Kapellmeister*, the singers remained a few days longer in Magdeburg without pay, and studied the opera with all their might and main. "Still," Wagner writes, "notwithstanding all my exertions, the singers only half knew their parts by heart. The performance was like a dream to everybody; not a soul could get any idea of the thing." At the second performance everything was to go better, but just before it began a quarrel arose between two of the singers; it came to blows; the *prima donna* went into hysterics, and the performance had to be put off; on the next day the company was broken up.

Wagner now turned to Berlin, where the director of the Königstadt theatre had promised him a performance of *Das Liebesverbot*. But nothing came of the promise, and in 1836 Wagner moved on to Königsberg, where he began by conducting orchestral concerts, and eventually was made conductor at the theatre. Here too the Director soon became bankrupt, and in the summer of 1837 our young *Meister*, who had in the meantime married the actress Wilhelmine Planer, once more resumed his wanderer's staff. He was appointed Kapellmeister in the *Stadttheater* at Riga, then under the directorship of Karl von Holtei. Here he remained from August 1837 till the end of June 1839, when a change of directors led to his departure.

In Riga Wagner found for the first time prolonged permanent employment in a well-regulated theatre. His guiding motive was here the same as that which forty years later became his first principle at Bayreuth; instead of the slovenly indifference usually found at theatres, he aimed at the utmost possible perfection of performance, even in the smallest works. "Wagner tormented my people," says Holtei, "with hours of interminable rehearsing; nothing pleased him; nothing was good enough; no *nuance* fine enough for him." It is interesting to note that under Wagner's direction Mozart

[1] Literally: "*it gives me no pleasure,*" but I find it impossible to render the meaning of the German word *Plaisir* exactly in English. Perhaps the nearest equivalent of the sentence would be: "it does not amuse me" (G. A. H.).

took the lead in the number of performances. Méhul's *Joseph* was studied with great enthusiasm, and achieved an extraordinary success; so did Cherubini's *Les deux journées*. Wagner afterwards spoke of these masters of the French school—Méhul, Cherubini, and Spontini, as, after Gluck and Mozart, the "solitary lodestars on the deserted sea of opera music." Those who only know Wagner from the usual caricatures of him will be astonished to learn that he personally stood up for Bellini's *Norma* in the Riga newspapers against the attacks of pseudo-German detractors. "Perhaps it is not a sin," he wrote, "if before retiring to rest one offers a prayer to Heaven that it may some day occur to German composers to write such melodies, to acquire such treatment of song. Song! song! and once more song! ye Germans!"

It is evident that conducting of this kind was bound in the long run to become intolerable to such a man as Wagner. "The typical spirit of our operatic performances filled me with disgust. . . . When conducting our ordinary operas I experienced a gnawing feeling of pain," he writes in reference to the Riga time. His own productive work alone gave him strength to endure; in this he was gradually attaining maturity and mastership. The dark, narrow, misty horizon of his present life was beginning to light up with the dawn of a glorious future. In Riga Wagner had written the words of *Rienzi*, and the first two acts of the music. This work was not designed for a provincial stage; he had long been in communication with Scribe, and although the negotiations had come to nothing—as was natural—he did not lose heart. In a letter from Riga, he writes: "I am simply *not* to be killed with my plans and aspirations." Suddenly making up his mind, he travelled with his wife *viâ* London to Paris, with the intention of himself trying to get one of his works accepted at the Grand Opéra.

Influence on his future career.

The period of his wanderings among small provincial theatres is herewith closed. It is not without importance for his future career; he had gained experience in theatrical matters; he had become acquainted with the world of the stage in Germany in those places where talents grow up and are formed; he had seen what tends to further an artist in his development, and what to hinder him; he had thoroughly studied the material at the disposal of a German dramatist. Besides this he had learned to know his German Fatherland and his German countrymen in the most various regions, from the Main to the Dwina, and therewith laid the foundation of his exact knowledge of the German genius.

3. 1839-1842.

Years of distress.

Wagner's residence in Paris lasted from September 1839 to April 1842. One hope after another was here disappointed. The introductions which he received from Meyerbeer[1] to the Director of the Grand Opéra and other personages, the visits to Scribe, the acquaintance with Halévy, Berlioz, Habeneck, Vieuxtemps, etc., the ostensible protection of the publishing firm Schlesinger, were all insufficient to open the doors of the Grand Opéra to him. The only outcome of these most unpleasant negotiations, which lasted almost for two years, was that the director of the opera gave the sketch of *Der Fliegende Holländer* behind Wagner's back to an obscure musician to compose, offering the German master 500 francs as compensation! It seemed as if he would have better luck with *Das Liebesverbot*, which had been accepted for performance at the *Renaissance* Theatre, but here it fared just as it had done at Magdeburg; directly the translation was finished, and the rehearsals were to begin, the theatre became bankrupt. Wagner now had the greatest difficulty in earning bread for himself and his wife; he composed songs, he wrote a large number of essays in French and German papers, but the work which paid him best was setting airs from operas by Halévy and Donizetti for all sorts of instruments, and arranging the operas themselves for the pianoforte.

Wilhelmine Wagner.

During the years of hardship in Paris, Wagner's young wife, Wilhelmine, showed to the greatest advantage. It eventually became evident that she had but little sympathy with her husband's art, and little understanding for his whole

[1] At that time Wagner was convinced that Meyerbeer meant to deal fairly with him; this is testified to by letters flowing over with gratitude. It was not till later that he discovered these civilities to have been "artificial, paltry, and absolutely without any result." Now it is becoming clear that even these words do not express the whole truth. Glasenapp says (i. 416), "It is beyond all dispute that Meyerbeer in fact only introduced Wagner to places when he could certainly foresee that, either for internal or for external reasons, his introduction would lead to nothing."

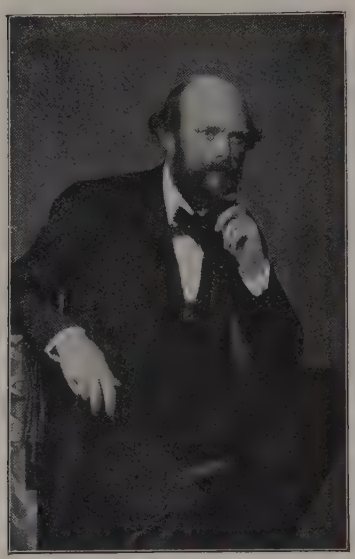
nature, so that the marriage, which was not blessed with children, became for her an unhappy one, whilst for her husband it was positively tragic. Without the Paris episode we should scarcely understand why Wagner should have loved her so tenderly until her death in 1866, but his gratitude to her for the courage and devotion, as well as practical sense which she showed on this occasion was inextinguishable. Nor must we forget the little circle of German friends which collected round Wagner; the nearest to him were a philologist named Lehr, Anders, librarian and student of Beethoven, and Ernst Kietz, a painter—all young, and as poor as church mice. In their cheerful society the young *Meister* often forgot his troubles, and gave the rein to his wild spirits. How often in the course of his life was he preserved by his inexhaustible fund of gaiety!

These three years were an eternity. At night sleep was banished by care; not unfrequently the only guest at their table was hunger. The want and the misery of such a time are not to be described in a few sentences. A true picture can only be given by a patient enumeration of comfortless, every-day particulars. Even Glasenapp's detailed account is insufficient to convey the full extent of his misery, since the greater part of his material is obtained from the accounts of acquaintances of that time, who only saw Wagner's outer side. Whoever wishes to see his inner soul during this time, when the poverty of his outer circumstances was but a small thing compared with his despair at the destruction of all his hopes, should read the little stories entitled *Ein deutscher Musiker in Paris*, in the first volume of his collected works. "In them," he says, "I related, in the form of stories, and not without humour, my own fortunes, especially in Paris, up to actual death by starvation, which I had indeed luckily escaped. Every sentence of what I wrote was a cry of revolt against the modern condition of art" (iv. 324).

The new path.

From these last words we learn that the residence in Paris led to the first determining crisis in Wagner's life. "I entered a new path," he says, "that of revolt against the public art of our time" (iv. 323). It is of the utmost importance to note that this revolt of Wagner's took place in the year 1840. For the revolt against public art was bound with mathematical certainty to lead to a revolt against the social conditions which had led to such a state of public art, and the fact of his views having originated in this way shows that Wagner's so-called revolutionary tendencies rest upon an artistic, not upon a political foundation; he himself says "the motive of my revolt was love, not envy or vexation." So Wagner did not become a revolutionist in 1848, but in 1840. At a later date he was carried away by the waves of a political revolution, not because he really belonged to it, but because both he and his adversaries were temporarily deceived by a semblance. It was the artist who revolted, the dramatic poet. He had made acquaintance with the theatres of his fatherland both in large towns and in small, and had witnessed their miserable condition; he had hurried to Paris, then the artistic centre from which all Germany was ruled, and had found there nothing but a moral slough; every-

thing which he held sacred was an article of traffic, and he had to admit to himself that "all these artistic elements which made up the world filled him with disgust and contempt" (iv. 322). Now Wagner knew how he stood towards the modern theatre. Yielding to the pressure of circumstances, he was induced to continue working for the theatre for some years longer. He attempted to influence it in the direction of reform. At last, however, in 1849, when he finally turned his back upon our corrupt public art, and not on art only, but on our whole society, he simply acted in accordance with the inner convictions he had held ever since 1840.



Ernst Kietz.

Two important results.

This was undoubtedly the most important result of Wagner's residence in Paris for the inner course of his life. Two other points have to be noted among his numerous experiences. In Paris, Wagner discovered the enormous effect produced by *correctness* and technical *perfection* in musical and dramatic representations — the things, as we have seen, for which he himself had striven; in Paris Wagner learnt to distinguish quite clearly what was essentially characteristic of the German mind by his experience of what was *not* German.

The French public has a much greater longing for technical perfection than the German; it possesses infinite refinement of feeling for every *nuance*. The performance of the Ninth Symphony in the Conservatoire after three years' study, the finished performance of Beethoven's quartets, the endless care, the great and well-directed labour bestowed upon the rehearsals at the Grand Opéra—these are some of Wagner's Paris experiences, the last effects of which we find in Bayreuth, where the realism of the French first gains a meaning by entering the service of German idealism. That was a positive experience of the highest value; no less important for his whole career was the negative experience.

When Wagner came to Paris, he really imagined that he would be able to compose music to French *libretti*. Mozart had however already been obliged to give up the attempt. "This language," he cried in despair, "the devil has made!" That testifies to the depth of his dramatic instinct. Wagner, with whom the poem in tones is inseparable from the poem in words, could only speak in one language—the German; he himself found this out in Paris. If Mozart in Paris "could find no great pleasure in anything" except in feeling "that he was an honest German,"[1] Wagner felt in a very similar way; his own heart was German; he had made acquaintance with the most different races of

[1] *Cf.* the letter to his father of May 29th 1778.

Germans; but the distinctive character of the German only became clear to him through his intimacy with the very different character of the French. Now there awoke a burning love for his German fatherland; now he first swore "eternal fidelity" to it (i. 24); now arose his first longing for everything which had grown up on the soil of his home, and his first conviction that his art could only strike root in that soil. *Die Feen* had been sketched from a dramatic tale of Gozzi; *Das Liebesverbot* from a comedy by Shakespeare; *Rienzi* from a novel of Bulwer Lytton. But in his Paris misery the first figure —after Beethoven—which appeared to comfort him was Goethe,[1] and *Faust* led the *Meister*—whose German consciousness was now awakened—back to the German *legend*. In Paris the first germs of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* were conceived; in Paris he laid the foundation of his extensive knowledge of the German *legend* and the Teutonic myth; in Paris Wagner wrote the *Fliegender Holländer*, a work which touches "strings that can only vibrate in German hearts" (i. 24.)

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4. 1842-1849.

First successes.

When Wagner went abroad, it was in the hope that he would be able thence to exert an influence upon Germany; he was not deceived; this one hope of his was fulfilled, but not in the way he had imagined. His *Rienzi* was sent in from Paris and was accepted for performance at the *Hoftheater* in Dresden, which would certainly not have been the case if the score had been received from Magdeburg or Riga. Even the absurd rumour that Wagner was "a pupil of Meyerbeer," was of use to him. At this moment one simple and capable man spoke a decisive word for the acceptance of *Rienzi;* this was the excellent director of the chorus, Fischer, one of the first who recognised Wagner's importance.[2]

In April 1842 Wagner left Paris and migrated to Dresden, to prepare the performance of his work. For all sorts of reasons however it was delayed until October. Without Wagner's inflexible energy it would scarcely have been performed even then. At last the day arrived. On October 20th 1842 the first performance of an Opera by Richard Wagner took place—for that of *Das Liebesverbot* in Magdeburg cannot be counted as one. The *Meister* was in his thirtieth year. The success was immense; the enthusiasm in Dresden unparalleled; from Leipzig too, the art connoisseurs flocked to the performances. With one step Wagner became famous.

Der Fliegende Holländer was now also put into rehearsal, and performed on January 3rd 1843. Once more the immediate result was such that it could be

[1] Wagner's Faust Overture belongs to the year 1840.

[2] Regarding Fischer's remarkable achievements Wagner writes: "They entitle Fischer's name to a place amongst those of the men who have furthered the right understanding of great masterworks" (v. 138).

called a triumph. Wagner, who had in consequence of the death of two conductors been provisionally entrusted with the conducting of his own works, and had thus found an opportunity of exercising his eminent talent in this branch, was appointed *Königlicher Kapellmeister* on February 1st 1843. He held this post until May 9th 1849, when he was accused of being involved in the Dresden insurrection of May and had to flee from Germany.

Even before his rapid advance to the post of Kapellmeister the first signs of a change in public opinion had began to show themselves. The newspaper critics were not at all pleased with fame so suddenly acquired without their aid or sanction; the success of *Rienzi* had taken them aback, but they soon collected their senses again and found so many faults in *Der Fliegende Holländer* that the *Intendant* was scared, and withdrew the beautiful work, in spite of its great success, after the fourth performance. It was not revived at Dresden for two and twenty years. And now, when Wagner entered upon his duties with fiery zeal; when he performed Mozart with the delicate *nuances* of life in the place of rigid classicism; when he made a new translation of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, retaining the accents of the original, and re-wrote the close as Schiller had wished it to be; when he performed Weber's works in such a manner that his widow exclaimed she now heard them rightly given for the first time since her husband's death (but in a different way to the tradition which had crept in meanwhile!); when in 1845, with his *Tannhäuser*, he almost entirely deserted the trodden path of the opera, and required from the singers that they should in the first place be actors; when in 1846 he undertook to prove that the ninth symphony of Beethoven was "a human gospel," and not as was supposed in Dresden "the abortive work of a deaf musician," etc., etc.—then the critics rose up in all their hatred against the disturber of the peace, and "worked with malignant rancour systematically to confuse the mind of the public" (L. i. 110). In a now forgotten work published in 1843, entitled *Kaleidoskop von Dresden*,[1] one could still read unbiassed judgments such as the following: "Wagner's works are the creation of mighty and unbridled imagination, of rich, almost too rich genius; he entirely forsakes the beaten track of all other composers, old and new. His works are a chaos of tones" (*n. b.* only *Rienzi* and *Der Holländer* had then appeared!), "a sea of harmony more likely to overpower the listener at first than to be understood. The man is still young; a world is open to him, and many a laurel grows therein which may yet afford him a wreath. In Dresden Wagner enjoys the undivided respect and love of the public." That is the testimony of an impartial man, and is all the more valuable from the fact that Wagner shortly afterwards protested publicly in the newspapers against the "aspersions deliberately cast upon his artistic intentions" and against the impudence of the critics who always observed "considerate moderation" towards other people, even when blaming them, whilst with him they invariably assumed "a tone of carping disparagement."

[1] By C. P. Sternau. Magdeburg (Inkermann).

This attitude of the critics towards Wagner must detain us for a moment; it is just as characteristic as the attitude of the *Regisseur* Hauser with regard to *Die Feen;* a man may be known not only by his friends, but by his enemies. Wagner and the critics.

Everywhere, and at every time, Wagner's works have produced an overpowering effect upon the public, provided that it was naïve and unprejudiced; only an open heart was required to accept their beauties, without any effort whatever. But then came the critic—the newspaper critic—usually a decayed musician, who had failed in his own art and taken refuge in criticism, or more rarely a professed æsthetician, whose principle was "the justification of every feeling to the reason"; he croaked, and grumbled, and scolded, till he had succeeded in spoiling the pleasure of the public and clouding its healthy natural judgment. What the Dresdener had loudly applauded on the night before, he turned against, directly the reviewer of the *Dresdener Journal* or the *Abendzeitung* had pronounced his oracular judgment, and proved conclusively that it could not be beautiful. It is quite sufficient to name the persons with whom these Beckmesser critics contrasted Wagner, in order to show their incompetence. Just as the Vienna critics once preferred a Gyrowetz and a Boccherini to Mozart, so did the Dresden critics point to Hiller and Reissiger[1] to prove the worthlessness of Wagner. It would scarcely be worth while to draw attention to these effusions of unspeakable folly, were it not that the attitude of the critics plays a very great part in Wagner's life. Later there may have existed for a time a real organized party against him, because so many of these gentlemen of the press thought fit to consider themselves personally aggrieved by his *Judenthum in der Musik;* but too much weight must not be attached to this; the most that Wagner's essay did was to add fuel to the flame which was already burning; the attitude of the press did not require any special stimulus. An upright, noble-minded, absolutely unselfish man like Wagner, a man burning with passion for pure and holy art, a man who throughout the whole course of his life trod his own interests under foot, who, without ever being for a moment deterred by any considerations either for himself or for others, amidst "the wild play for profit or for peril" around him, steered straight for his end, that of employing the rare gifts which God had confided to him, for the welfare of art and of his fatherland:—such a man was bound by the laws of nature to call forth, wherever he appeared, the ready and bitter opposition of all the mean-thinking, of all who chaffer with art and with artists, of all the disciples of mediocrity. The entire army of spiteful malice and the army of sexless impotence were his born enemies; he had only to appear, and they were at once in arms. Never did an artist awaken such irreconcilable hatred against himself, or resentment which rose to such a pitch of frenzy. When the æsthetical writer F. T. Vischer says of the second part of Goethe's Faust that it is "a cobbled production,"[2] every person of good feeling revolts against the bad taste of his expression; the

[1] Reissiger's name is now only known as that of the composer of the *Dernière Pensée de Weber*.

[2] *Kritische Gänge*, ii. 60.

choice of such a word as "cobbled" (*geschustert*), with reference to a Goethe, indicates the offensive coarseness of a mind which, though educated indeed, is quite without refinement, which lacks even the instinctive discrimination of the peasant, who took off his hat, without knowing that it was "*Herr Geheimrat*," at the mere sight of the poet's radiant eye. What then shall we say to the tone which has been adopted by almost the entire press of Europe with regard to Richard Wagner? I will not defile the pages of this book with extracts[1] from this scurrilous literature; it is sufficient to observe that compared with them Herr Vischer's criticisms of Goethe appear quite choice and respectable. It is remarkable, too, that Wagner's person was the object of these attacks even in almost a greater degree than his art. Every malicious piece of gossip, every low slander was employed against him; attempts were made to bring him into contempt by means of infamous accusations regarding his private life; to make him ridiculous by lying accounts of his unbounded vanity, and his "Sybaritic" habits; to make him hated by accusing him of jealous ambition, unscrupulous ingratitude, &c. To refute these charges is unnecessary, but it would not be right to pass over in silence such a remarkable fact as this of the hatred which he awakened. When we set it against the love of such men as Franz Liszt and King Ludwig, and many another noble spirit, or the devoted and enthusiastic love of the musicians who played under his direction, his "*theure Musikusse*," as he called them, and of his singers, in every place and at every time, some light will be thrown upon Wagner's deepest nature. Richard Wagner is the artist whom Schiller sighed for: "a strange figure in his century," come, "fearful as Agamemnon's son, to purify it." Wagner's heart too knew hatred, hatred for art prostituted, art which had become an industry; hatred for hypocrisy;[2] hatred for a world of pretended sanctity. But this hatred sprang from love; Wagner "revolted out of love, and not out of hatred or envy." All those who opposed him revolted against him out of hatred; and the intensity of their hatred is the measure of the intensity of his love.

It has been supposed that the most striking element in Wagner's character was the immense energy of his will. This is not quite accurate, inasmuch as the will *per se* resembles a blind impulse, and conveys no intimation of the essential characteristics of the individual. Napoleon possessed a similar energy of the will. What distinguished Wagner, next to his uncompromising truthfulness, was his *selflessness*. To the superficial observer Wagner appeared a complete egoist, because he saw the *Meister* unflinchingly working for "his cause" regardless of everything else. But his cause was the cause of all, the holy cause of art and of all mankind. Such disdainful neglect of his own interests, such want of submissiveness, of so-called worldly wisdom, is without a parallel; true, he required from others almost unlimited self-sacrifice, but

[1] A few specimens relating to Wagner's art, and not to his person, have been given in chap. iii.

[2] See the Section on Wagner's politics.

every breath of his own life was devoted to an ideal purpose. Again I must quote Schiller to depict Wagner: "How shall the artist preserve himself from the corrupting influences of his time, those influences which are around him on every side? By despising their verdict. Let him look upwards to his honour and to the law, not downwards to happiness and his own needs." Wagner never looked downwards, either to happiness or to his own needs, and therefore his entire life, from the Rienzi triumph until the end, was one long martyrdom. For others the fame, the honours, the outward success, of his last years would have been a rich reward, complete happiness; not so for him; he had never coveted honours or fame. "I do not *wish* to be famous," he writes in 1851 to his friend Uhlig, and later to Liszt: "away with fame and all such nonsense; we do not live in a time when fame can bring joy or give honour." Wagner's purpose was impersonal; this cannot be repeated too often; it was to raise art to its true dignity. And if he ever desired a cheering stimulus in the course of his life, if he ever coveted a reward, it was not fame nor gold, but love that he longed for. "This man will never be quite happy," a Frenchman said of Wagner, "for he will always discover the suffering, and share their sorrows through sympathy." So did Wagner love. Hear him speak of his mother; consider his touching affection for his wife Wilhelmina, who—unknowingly—brought so much bitterness even into his quiet home; think of his glowing love for his fatherland; of his passionate fondness for animals,[1] of the many passages in his writings where he speaks of love and sympathy, and the tones which he has found in his works to express those feelings; and then take up the letters to his closest friends, and see how he again and again cries for love, out of the fearful solitude of genius, "like as the hart desireth the water-brooks." In a letter to Roeckel he speaks of his own increasing fame, and declares that it gives him no satisfaction. "Could I be vain and proud," he says, "how happy might I now be"; one thing alone can comfort him: "that I should be not only admired, but loved as well; when criticism ceases, love begins, and it has brought many hearts near to me."

One more remark before I close the observations to which I have been led by the critics. The common principle of separating the artist from the man has very often been applied to Wagner. I will admit the distinction, without enquiring whether it has any deeper justification. If we are to sever the artist and his works from the man, differences of opinion are in this case admissible regarding the artist, but not regarding the man. To attempt to compel admiration of Wagner's works would be a ridiculous proceeding. Many a man may be so organized that they must remain eternally unintelligible to him, or he may condemn them on account of some principle deserving of all respect. What is not allowable is that credence should be given to every miserable lie, slander and misrepresentation, and to every stupid misunderstanding about a man like Richard Wagner. Whoever will observe this, and will learn to know the

[1] See Wolzogen's *Richard Wagner und die Tierwelt.*

true Wagner, *must* love him, and must—even if he cares nothing for Wagner's art, and discovers all kinds of human weaknesses in him—look up with reverence to his pure, strong, lofty character.

Troubles of a conductor.

What I have said concerning the attitude of the critics towards Wagner will explain the fruitlessness of his endeavours to exert a permanent and ennobling influence upon the Dresden Opera. The material was here the best in Germany; the orchestra, according to Wagner's testimony, "in its kind the most perfect and exquisite in the fatherland"; the performances of the chorus under Fischer "quite unrivalled"; Tichatschek, the *Heldentenor*, possessed "a voice which was a marvel of masculine beauty," and above all there was Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, the greatest female singer that has ever arisen in Germany; at the head of such an institution a Richard Wagner! And yet this combination of rare excellences was unable to make head against the prevailing indolence and habits of routine, against the press and the demoralisation of the artists which it had intimidated, against the "despotism of spiteful ignorance," against the "courtly narrowness" and arrogance of an *Intendant* who bullied his subordinates the *Kapellmeisters*, and trembled before the press. Wagner's own account (vii. 135) describes the situation perfectly in two sentences: "All my attempts to introduce reforms into the opera; my proposals, by means of persistent effort, to direct the institution itself into the way which would lead to the realization of my ideal wishes, by taking the excellence which was attained on rare occasions as the measure for every performance—all failed. I learnt at last to see very clearly what were the real objects of the modern theatre, and more especially of the Opera; this irresistible conviction it was which filled me with disgust and despair in such a degree that I gave up all attempt at reform, and withdrew entirely from interference with such a frivolous institution."[1]

Wagner had not sought the Dresden appointment; it had been pressed upon him. Care for his material existence, and especially his obligations to his creditors, who had been waiting for years for their money, decided him. Yet Wagner declares (iv. 338): "To my few nearer friends I made no secret of my inherent dislike of the appointment of *Hofkapellmeister*, and my scruples about accepting it when it seemed likely to be offered to me." This is expressly confirmed by the official historian of the Dresden theatre Prölss.[2] The situation became more and more intolerable to Wagner. In the protocol of a conference between the *Intendant* and Wagner towards the end of his tenure of office we read: "Wagner declared however that he himself felt that he was unsuited to his official position, and would gladly retire from it, but for the anxiety which he was under for his wife and his domestic affairs." The protocol continues in delightful official style: "it was conceded that he was unsuited to his official position, and a humble report will eventually be submitted to His

[1] Wagner's last attempt in Dresden was his detailed *Plan for the organization of a German National Theatre for the Kingdom of Saxony*, (1848).

[2] Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hoftheaters zu Dresden. 1878.

WILHELMINE SCHRÖDER-DEVRIENT

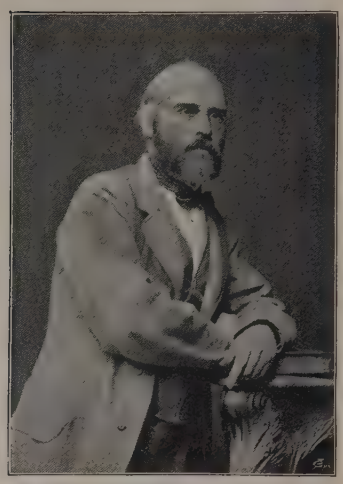
Majesty to that effect" (*loc. cit.* p. 141). It has often been asserted that Wagner was guilty of ingratitude in Dresden; in view of such an accusation it is as well to state the real circumstances once for all: the *Intendant* was, as we see, merely waiting for the first opportunity which offered of dismissing his troublesome Kapellmeister. It would therefore be quite wrong to suppose that the revolution which broke out in May 1849, and which led to Wagner's compulsory retirement from office, was really of decisive importance in the matter. External events contributed only in so far that they finally severed the tie which had virtually been relinquished, on both sides, long before. At last, when a warrant of arrest was issued against Wagner, and he had to flee, he blessed the fate which had broken his bonds: "This Dresden, if I had remained there, would have been the grave of my art" (U. 247).

Wagner as revolutionist.

We saw that Wagner had already "revolted" in Paris, in 1840, and had then "entered upon a new path." His Dresden experiences could only confirm him in this. He was filled with "disgust and despair." The frivolity which he observed in the theatre led him to realize the frivolity of society in general, of this "world with its sanctimonious affectation of concern for art and culture." "In meditating on the possibility of altering the conditions of the theatre I was driven quite naturally to the full recognition of the worthlessness of our political and social conditions, which were absolutely incapable of producing, out of themselves, any other public art than that which I had attacked. *This recognition was decisive for the whole subsequent course of my life*" (iv. 377). Wagner was therefore quite decidedly a revolutionist; he was one long before 1848, and he remained one until his death. In what sense he was a revolutionist I will explain in detail in my second chapter, in the sections on politics and regeneration. For the present it is sufficient to say that he had very few, and only very superficial points in common with the political leaders of the revolutionary movement of '48; in everything essential they were strangers to him, and he still more a stranger to them. Bakunin's remark before the Court, "that he knew Wagner at once for a visionary,"[1] is characteristic; these sober politicians had a right perception; Wagner did not belong to them. Wagner himself however was deceived by the incontrollable might of his longing. Here, as so often in his friendships and his hopes, the depth of his need, together with the never-resting creative fancy of his genius, led him astray. Similar fatal illusions are to be found even in political geniuses, in Alexander and Napoleon. It is certain that Wagner failed at first to see that those who wished for a revolution in 1848 were precisely the same people as those who strove for reaction, by which I mean to convey that both were equally politicians, men quite satisfied with modern society, only one party wanted rather more political freedom conceded, the other rather less. Any real difference of principle between them did not exist. Wagner, the

[1] From the judicial records, quoted in Dinger's *Richard Wagner's geistige Entwickelung*, i. 179.

poet, on the contrary, stood on exactly the same ground as Schiller; he was "drawn away from the evil sensible form of the present to find a new sensible body" (*i.e.* a new social ideal), "which should correspond to the true being of mankind" (iv. 378). The revolution which he dreamed of would have had therefore to go much deeper than that of the most extreme radical of 1848. In the same place he speaks of it as: "the destruction of the sensible form of the present time." The misunderstanding in which he was entangled is like that which would most probably have arisen if Schiller, instead of enthusiastically watching the outbreak of a revolution from a distance, had experienced it in his own immediate neighbourhood.



August Roeckel.

Wagner's part in the revolutionary movement of the years 1848-49 can be best illustrated by describing the relations in which he stood to August Roeckel, one of his best friends in Dresden, and a true child of 1848. Born of a musical family, and himself educated as an artist, Roeckel occupied in the Dresden Court opera the post of *Musikdirektor*, that is to say, he was Wagner's immediate subordinate; at bottom however his nature was not artistic, but entirely political. Violent, energetic, deeply convinced, actuated by the most generous feelings,[1] and capable of every sacrifice, he took a leading part in the May insurrection, and was punished for his intrepidity with twelve years' imprisonment. None of the political revolutionists stood so near to Wagner as he did; until his death in 1876 the *Meister* was true to him. Yet Roeckel was certainly not capable of comprehending Wagner's views, in their deeper purport; this became very evident in the sequel. Wagner's mistake was due to the wave of enthusiasm which passed over Germany at the time of the revolution, and which transported even the more sober spirits into a state of exaltation, and for the time lifted them out of themselves. Besides, the earnest idealism of such men as Roeckel, fanned to white heat, led Wagner to over-estimate their intellectual capacity, small as it was in comparison with his own. Later, as his correspondence shows, Wagner saw his error very clearly; his affection for the true, generous heart of his friend remained; for the rest he knew that he could not hope for a deeper understanding. In this friendship Wagner's relation to the movement of 1848 is mirrored.

[1] Liszt, who is not likely to be suspected of sympathy with revolutionists, says of Roeckel, "he is a gentle, educated, humane, excellent man" (Letters, ii. 106). It is well to remember this estimate of him just now when his memory is being defamed by so many Wagner authors.

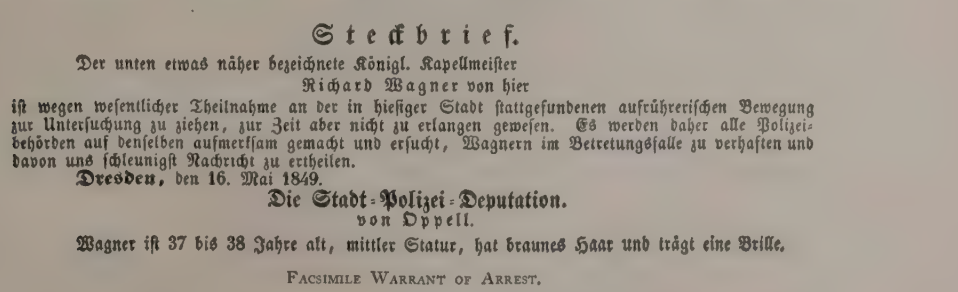
so was a section of the king's own ministry; in many places the militia refused to serve against the rebels, because the champions of the constitution seemed to them to be in the right.—Now the Prussian troops came up—an act which was branded by the Frankfort parliament as "serious breach of the peace of the empire," but which in reality was only incidentally concerned with the rebellion, being in fact the first step in a policy intended eventually to lead to the humiliation of Saxony before Prussia. After a fight which continued in the streets for several days, the rebellion was suppressed; a frightful and unjust retribution then fell upon the unfortunate country. The official reporters have much to tell of the "heroism" of the Prussian troops; but as their entire loss was thirty-one men, and their opponents, though fighting in a more sheltered position, and with their line of retreat open, lost exactly six times as many, it is fair to suppose that the latter fought with at least equal heroism.

That Wagner's sympathies were with the rebels cannot be questioned. It seems too that an occasional opportunity occurred to him of rendering them certain civilian's services; in a letter of 1851 he says: "I assisted in bringing up supplies," and according to some accounts, (which however are contradicted by others,) he is said to have superintended the ringing of the storm bell in the tower of the *Kreuzkirche*.[1] To piece history together out of hundreds of conflicting and quite unverifiable accounts, (the only evidence which we possess of this stirring period,) is quite impossible; but we may trust the man whose whole life bore out his words to Liszt: "I cannot lie; it is in fact the only sin that I know." (L., ii. 23). For the extent to which Wagner was implicated, his own evidence is decisive; *i.e.* not only his words but also his actions. And what do these latter show, first of all? When Dresden was taken by the Prussians, Wagner went to Chemnitz to his brother-in-law Wolfram, not with any purpose of flight, but with the firm intention of returning to Dresden as soon as the excitement had subsided. His brother-in-law persuaded him with some difficulty to leave Saxony, and brought him to Weimar. Here too Wagner remained quite unconcerned; he walked about in the town, went to the theatre, and never doubted but that the misunderstanding would soon be cleared up. Then came the news that a warrant had been issued against him. To be accused and to be condemned were at that time very much the same thing; as Roeckel remarks, also with reference to Wagner: "whatever evidence was required, the judges always found it."[2] The endeavours of his great friend Franz Liszt, who now first begins to influence his life, and enters at once in a decisive way, were successful in obtaining a passport for Wagner under another name, and in trans-

[1] Professor Dr Thum (of Reichenbach i. V.) met Wagner on the tower during the fighting, and writes that the master had a lively conversation with him about the Leipzig *Gewandhaus* Concerts, Berlioz, Beethoven, absolute and dramatic music, antique and christian philosophy, etc.! (*Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, Sept. 1, 1893). Professor Dr Gustav Kietz, the well-known Dresden sculptor, told me that Wagner had tried to induce him to go up onto the tower, saying that the view was so splendid, and the sound of the cannon-thunder and of the bells together, so intoxicating!

[2] Roeckel *Sachsen's Erhebung und das Zuchthaus zu Waldheim*, 2nd edition, p. 59.

porting him across the frontier into Switzerland. These are his *actions;* they do not point to any consciousness of guilt. His *words* leave still less doubt. In 1856, when he wished a request for amnesty to be presented to the King of Saxony, to allow him to return to German soil, a difficulty arose in the fact that "he was conscious of not having committed any actual crime cognizable by a Court of law, so that it would be difficult for him to admit any such act." (L., ii. 122). Still more decidedly does Wagner express himself in *Ueber Staat und Religion.* "Anyone who assigns to me the rôle of a political revolutionist, that is who supposes that I really belonged to any faction of such a kind, must know very little of me; he would be judging by a semblance which might deceive a police official, but never a statesman" (viii. 8). This decides the matter for every person competent to judge. And yet *one* impudent lie has been told, and is so tenacious of life that it cannot be often enough refuted. During the revolt the old opera house had been burnt to the ground; in the summer of 1849 the rumour got abroad that it was Wagner who had set fire to it! At once he entered protest against this cowardly slander, which, as he said, had arisen in the "mud pool of civic rectitude and generosity" (letter to Liszt of July 9, 1849), but the story was too good, and for many years it engaged the attention of the press, until at last, when conclusive proof was brought of the impossibility of Wagner having been in any way connected with the affair, the truth became generally known and this particular lie died out. Subsequently Graf Beust revived the old slander, with a slight variation, in his Memoirs *Aus Dreivierteljahrhunderten*, and invented the story that Wagner had attempted to set fire to the *Prinzenpalais!* To support the authority of his own word he adds, as convincing evidence of the truth of the accusation, that Wagner had been condemned to death *in contumaciam* for this offence. Fortunately there



Steckbrief.

Der unten etwas näher bezeichnete Königl. Kapellmeiſter
Richard Wagner von hier
iſt wegen weſentlicher Theilnahme an der in hieſiger Stadt ſtattgefundenen aufrühreriſchen Bewegung zur Unterſuchung zu ziehen, zur Zeit aber nicht zu erlangen geweſen. Es werden daher alle Polizeibehörden auf denſelben aufmerkſam gemacht und erſucht, Wagnern im Betretungsfalle zu verhaften und davon uns ſchleunigſt Nachricht zu ertheilen.
Dresden, den 16. Mai 1849.
Die Stadt-Polizei-Deputation.
von Oppell.
Wagner iſt 37 bis 38 Jahre alt, mittler Statur, hat braunes Haar und trägt eine Brille.

FACSIMILE WARRANT OF ARREST.

exists an authority higher than that of the Graf's word, the *Königliches Amtsgericht*[1] in Dresden, which has certified officially that both the statements of the former Premier are untrue. The first may possibly be due to a confusion with the confectioner Woldemar Wagner,[2] who was suspected of having caused the

[1] The Criminal Court of Justice in Dresden.

[2] This seems, however, to me very improbable, as in the various official publications concerning the revolt of 1849, this "confectioner's assistant Wagner" is specially named; Richard Wagner not at all.

fire. The other statement is simply a malicious invention.[1] That it originated with Graf Beust is certainly not to be supposed; but his blind hatred misled him into believing everything which was said against Wagner without first testing the truth of the accusations.

Important results of this period.

Such were shortly the events of the Dresden years which led to the crisis in Wagner's life. With a creative genius like Wagner their importance is comparatively small. Whilst his fortunes now rose and now fell, whilst he strove and battled without resting, and himself was battled against and misjudged, there arose, as out of another world, his immortal works: *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, the first sketch of *Die Meistersinger*, the first draft of *Der Nibelungenring*, the draft of *Jesus von Nazareth* and others. These are the deeds of genius, these are his life, and these deeds will live and will bring forth life when the pitiable events of the movement of '48 have been long forgotten.

These seven years, so rich in external and internal events, were full of results for Wagner's inner life, in forming his views on art and on humanity; they may be summed up thus: In art they led to his final breach with the operatic stage and with the opera itself as a dramatic form, and at the same time to the full, conscious realization of what had long been unconsciously before him, namely the new drama and the plans for a new stage. Humanly, the events in Dresden led him to the mature conviction that society was standing on the verge of a mighty crisis, and that effective and thoroughgoing aid must be sought, not in politics, but in Regeneration. It must be noted that in each case the negation goes hand in hand with an equally emphatic affirmation. Wagner is incapable of serving two masters; his uncompromising condemnation of what is bad is the necessary correlative of his unconditional desire for what is good.

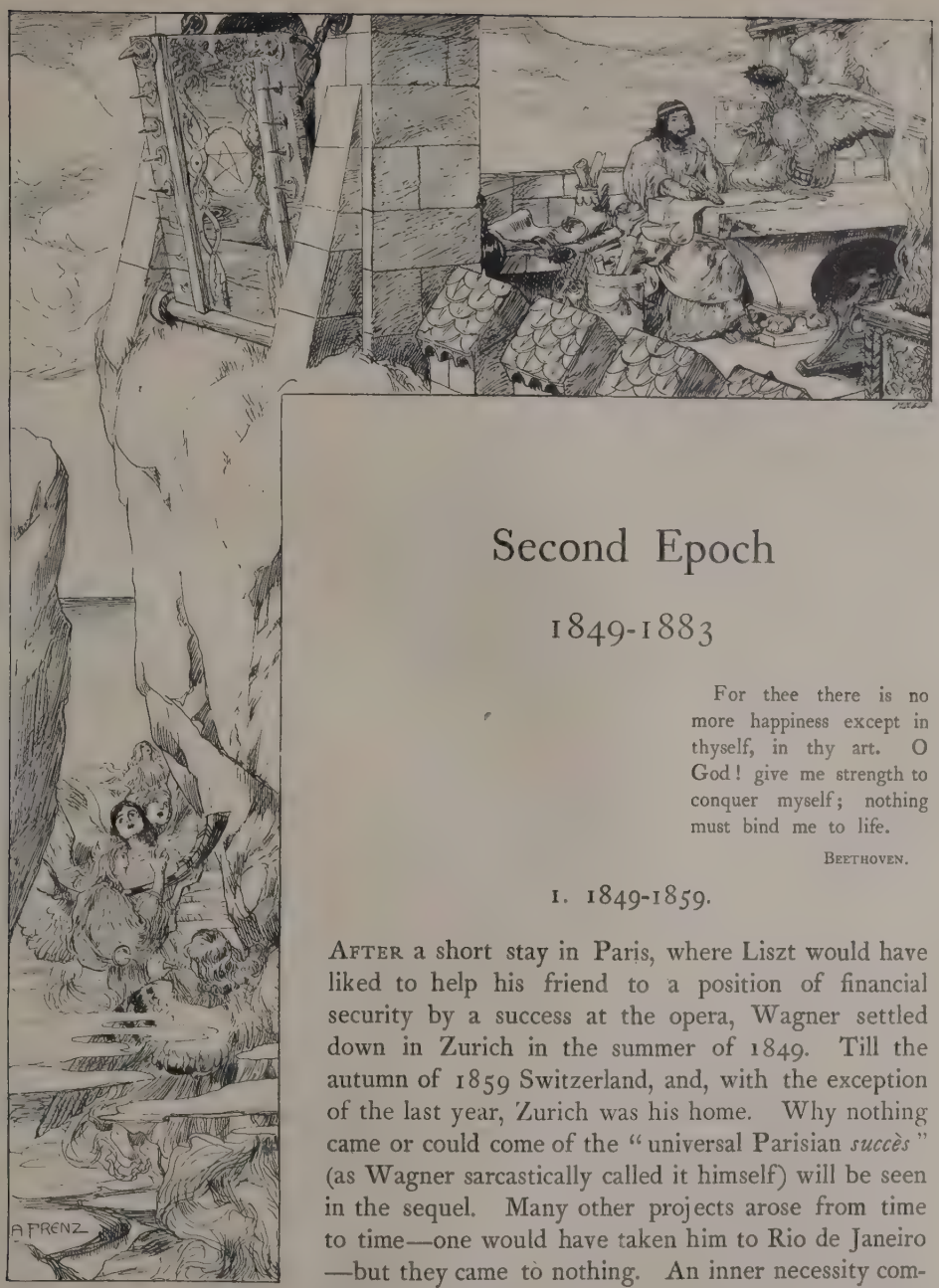
The Dresden catastrophe came as a true release. "Outlawed and persecuted, I was now bound by no ties to any sort of lie" (iv. 406). He could now proclaim the things which had become his sacred convictions freely to the whole world, and he did so in words of fire. This release from all restraint took place exactly at the moment when he was quite worthy of it, when the last illusion had been swept away. And this moment was not only figuratively but literally the central point of his life.

[1] For the rest see W. A. Ellis, 1849. *A Vindication* (Kegan Paul), 1892, a small treatise in which everything essential is collected from the official documents.

GOFREDO
FIRENZ

Richard Wagner

1853



Second Epoch

1849-1883

> For thee there is no more happiness except in thyself, in thy art. O God! give me strength to conquer myself; nothing must bind me to life.
>
> BEETHOVEN.

1. 1849-1859.

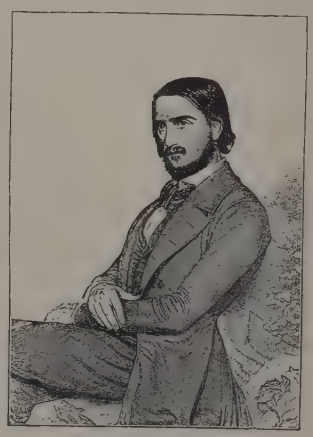
Social intercourse in Zurich.

AFTER a short stay in Paris, where Liszt would have liked to help his friend to a position of financial security by a success at the opera, Wagner settled down in Zurich in the summer of 1849. Till the autumn of 1859 Switzerland, and, with the exception of the last year, Zurich was his home. Why nothing came or could come of the "universal Parisian *succès*" (as Wagner sarcastically called it himself) will be seen in the sequel. Many other projects arose from time to time—one would have taken him to Rio de Janeiro—but they came to nothing. An inner necessity compelled him to devote the next years entirely to creative work, and he lived in retirement; we may say *entirely*, for no importance attaches to the various episodes which from time to time broke the monotony of the exile's life. The summer holidays took him through various parts of Switzerland, and even to Italy; several visits were made to Paris, and in the spring of

1855 he spent three months in London, where want of means had compelled him to undertake the conductorship of the Philharmonic concerts. But the general physiognomy of his life remained the same. The temporary assistance which he gave at the Zurich theatre in the performances of some of the better operas (especially *Don Giovanni* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*), and the concerts which he occasionally undertook that he might perform music for himself (Haydn, Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, Weber and his own), are also matters of minor

Gottfried Semper.

Gottfried Keller.



Georg Herwegh.

importance. His social intercourse in Zurich was slight, if we except Gottfried Semper, Georg Herwegh, and Gottfried Keller. Hans von Bülow and Karl Ritter were amongst his friends at this time, but they were only temporarily resident in Zurich. To *Musikdirector* Heim and his gifted wife Wagner was specially attached, and he recited his *Nibelungenring* with them; pleasant hours were spent with Wille, the philosopher, and a merchant named Wesendonck, but on the whole he rather avoided a society which showed no deep understanding for his aims; especially he shunned "those devils of professors." He writes to Liszt: "the torments of society have become positively the most painful for me now, and I am always manœuvering to isolate myself."

The reason is obvious; Wagner had now just entered upon the "period of conscious artistic volition"; in his second epoch all outer things lose importance; external circumstances may help or may hinder, but cannot determine; in Zurich they neither helped nor hindered him, and there Wagner exhibited no decisive activity with regard to the outer world, as he did later in Paris, Munich and Bayreuth. Here in Zurich his life was that of his own creative soul; the things he brought forth were, in the first place, his theoretical writings on art and the drama, and then his art-works.

The true friends.

"You can believe me absolutely when I tell you that the sole reason of my continuing to live lies in my irresistible longing to complete a number of works of art which still possess vitality within me. I have clearly recognized the fact that

this creating and completing alone are able to satisfy me, and fill me with a desire for life which I often find inexplicable. . . . I cannot accept any office, nor anything which is its equivalent, and shall never do so; what I do require is a rich and honourable annuity, solely that I may be able to continue composing my works undisturbed, and quite regardless of worldly success. . . . Anyone who has the slightest real knowledge of the nature of my works, who knows and admires their special distinctive character, must see that a man of my sort, and more especially when dealing with such an institution as the theatre, can never on any terms consent to treat them as merchandise" (L., ii. 229). These words, which Wagner addressed to his friend Franz Liszt sometime in the fifties, are an epitome of the entire second half of his life. From this time onwards he lived solely and entirely for his art; for himself he sought nothing and aspired after nothing; just as little did he serve others; he lived *for* the world, but in one sense no longer *in* the world; he could say with Byron:

"I stood
Among them, but not of them, in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts."

Now he knew for certain what he was called to be in the world, and knowing this, he required of the world "room to live," without making his talents and his works into merchandise. The first person who fully understood him was King Ludwig of Bavaria; until 1864, when this exalted monarch entered with such decisive influence upon his life, Wagner had to pass through much adversity. His art had however produced a mighty effect; few had heard its voice; but those few, who made it possible for him to live without an official post, entirely for his art, at a time when the receipts from his operas were still excessively small, deserve to be mentioned with honour.

Franz Liszt.

Franz Liszt.

First in order, and intellectually far above all the others, is Franz Liszt. In a letter of 1856 Wagner describes his friendship with Liszt as "the most important and significant event of his life" (L., ii. 146); for not only did Liszt do more than anyone else to afford material aid to Wagner, but he alone was able, owing to his own personal eminence, to afford him artistic and moral support. Liszt performed the orphaned works of the exile, and was positively the only man living at the beginning of the fifties who was capable of doing this with intelligence, so that the little Grand Ducal theatre in Weimar formed at that time a centre from which Wagner's works—especially *Der Fliegende*

Holländer, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*—radiated into all Germany. At the same time Liszt prepared the way for a deeper understanding of the new art by his articles on these three works. Not only are they the first writings which ever appeared on Wagner, but as a profound and thoughtful introduction to the poems and the music they are to this day without a rival.[1] He was indefatigable in bringing forward Wagner's interests with the German Princes, with theatrical authorities, in the press, etc. Towards the end of 1851 Wagner writes to him: "In a word I may call you the creator of my present position, which is perhaps not without hope for the future" (L., i. 150). All this together however is but a small thing compared to what his love, his readiness of comprehension and his steadfast faith meant for the artist languishing in solitude. Liszt was the first person who recognized Wagner's immense importance—his "divine genius" (see his letter of October 7th, 1852); he regarded it as the object of his life, "to be worthy of Wagner's friendship." Wagner on his part writes to him out of an overflowing and grateful heart. "You have made me feel for the first and only time the rapture of being fully and perfectly understood; see, you have received me as I am, entirely; not one fibre, not one tiny throb of my heart that you have not felt with me" (L., ii. 42). The friendship between these two great men, and especially their correspondence, has often given occasion to a comparison with the relations between Schiller and Goethe. The comparison halts on both feet. The friendship between Goethe and Schiller is purely intellectual. In reading their letters, one thinks of them as already wandering in the Elysian fields, and there, in the full enjoyment of an eternal future, conversing about art and their works. Here on the contrary everything is dramatic, tragic, dæmonic. The first thing which Liszt does for Wagner is to save his life—for in prison he would have died; then he saves his works. Liszt's letters and his visits to Zurich were for years the real elements in which Wagner lived and created. This "giant heart that meets his own" is his comfort and his hope. "You, my only one, the dearest that I have; you who are Prince and World and everything to me! Truly, as far as I can see around me and into my future, I find nothing which can raise me up, sustain me, comfort me, strengthen me, and arm me for renewed struggles, but the sight of you once more, and the few weeks which you will devote to me." On the other hand it must not be overlooked that although Liszt could and did indeed give to Wagner a giant heart, and the abilities of a giant artist, there could be no talk of an interchange of definite critical ideas, such as there was between Goethe and Schiller. Richard Wagner created as we may imagine a Shakespeare to have created; his gift was like a force of nature, which acts in a special way and cannot act differently, a force ruled by necessity as by a divine command. Even Liszt had doubts about *Lohengrin* at first; he was afraid of the "high ideal colouring," he had doubts about the poem of *Tristan*, etc. It was the first

[1] These articles, which cannot be recommended too strongly, have been collected and published by Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881.

performance of *Lohengrin*—conducted by himself—that brought the conviction that "this lovely work" was "the height and perfection of art"; it was the performance of *Tristan* which showed him that he had not understood it before, and caused him to bend in silent admiration before the "heavenly miracle." Wagner never answered these doubts and criticisms; he composed his works as he felt that he must compose them. As a creative artist he could not be otherwise than alone; not even a Goethe or a Schiller could have advised him, or have done anything but admire the work when complete. But what could be given to him was love, "the home of his art," as he calls it, and that Liszt gave him.[1]

Julie Ritter.

The first helpers in need.

The names of the other friends pale before that of Liszt, but the merit of their faithfulness remains. When Wagner arrived at Zurich, there were two excellent men, Wilhelm Baumgartner,[2] a teacher of the pianoforte, and Jakob Sulzer, first *Staatschreiber*, who assisted him during the first weeks. A lady personally unknown to Wagner, Madame Laussot, the wife of a French merchant, possessed the means of rendering him more substantial assistance. She was English born (Miss Taylor), and during a long stay in Dresden she had acquired an enthusiastic admiration for Wagner's works.[3] More important than this temporary assistance was the small yearly allowance which Wagner received regularly from the end of 1851 to the end of 1856 from Frau Julie Ritter, a friend who had sometimes helped him before, and who employed a considerable legacy to convert her occasional support into a safe and permanent fund. Her son Karl was a talented young musician, and lived a good deal in Wagner's neighbourhood in Zurich. In the correspondence

Wilhelm Baumgartner.

Jakob Sulzer.

[1] See especially iv. 409, etc.

[2] Wagner wrote an essay in 1852 on Baumgartner's songs; it is of enduring value, inasmuch as it refers rather to the entire tribe than to this species, which in itself is more harmless than noticeable. (Printed in the letters to Uhlig.)

[3] She afterwards married the well-known author Karl Hillebrand.

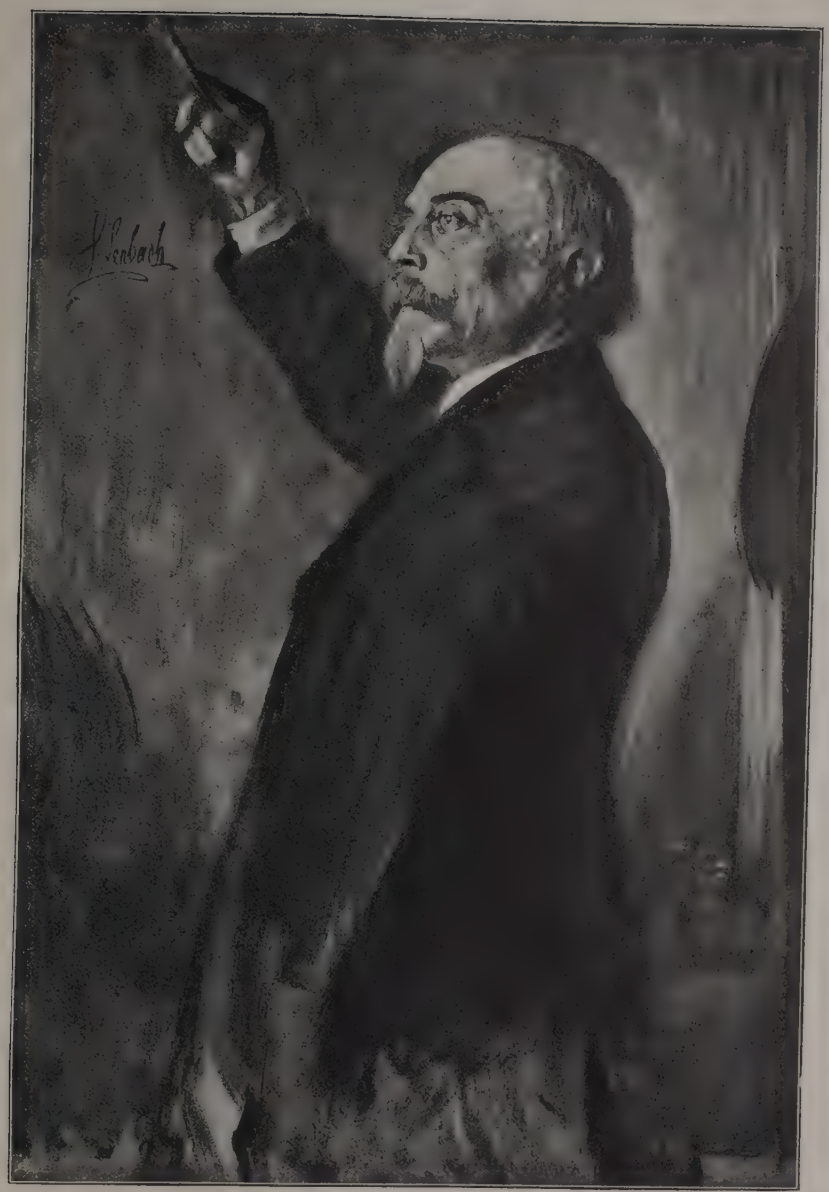
Richard Pohl

with Liszt and with Uhlig he is frequently named.[1] This friendship was also a direct outcome of Wagner's art; it had been inspired by the performances of *Tannhäuser* in Dresden. Karl's brother, Alexander Ritter, the well-known composer, was at that time a member of the orchestra. As one of the first and most active disciples of the *Meister* he deserves praise; through his marriage with Wagner's niece, Franziska, a closer connection ensued. In the year 1856 Frau Ritter was replaced by a rich merchant, Herr Wesendonck and his wife. They placed a charming châlet on their estate near Zurich at his disposal, and helped him in other ways to secure his independence. Frau Wesendonck was no common woman. Before she had met Wagner, his works had inspired her with enthusiasm, and her warm interest in his creations was one of the few rays of sunshine during the years in Zurich. That all these friendships yet had something unsatisfactory in them is explained by the very natural circumstance that these excellent helpers in need could not possibly at that time have a clear perception of whom they were helping. They could not guess that their kind sympathy for a musician in distress was an action of historical importance, and thus were naturally disposed to make use of their influence with the best intentions. This, genius, who alone knows what course he must follow, never can brook, and thus these various relations were, one after the other, gradually dissolved by the master himself, who preferred to plunge into the unknown, into such destitution that he had to carry his watch to the pawnbroker,[2] rather than resign one *iota* of his self-determining independence. To make him independent of external success he needed

FRANZ MÜLLER.

[1] Schopenhauer, too, whom Karl Ritter visited in 1855, remarks, "I was much pleased with him."

[2] During the composition of the second act of *Tristan!*



HANS VON BÜLOW.

a *royal* friend, not so much to provide the funds, as for the sake of the proud independence a benefactor confers where generosity is not a sacrifice, but simply a token of good will. In the absence of such a friend he was compelled at the close of this period, *i.e.* towards the end of 1859, to renew his connection with the theatres, in order to provide himself with the means of subsistence.

The first disciples.

In the meantime, however, other friendships had sprung up; by degrees a little band of enthusiastic disciples was formed, mostly musicians, whom Liszt had led to a deeper understanding of Wagner's art: Klindworth, Alexander Ritter, Peter Cornelius, Draeseke and others. They were joined by such men as Brendel, the well-known historian of music, *Regierungsrat* Müller, a man thoroughly conversant with German literature and mythology, and a clever writer.[1] Half musician, half author, and excellent as both, was Richard Pohl. We first meet him in 1852, and now in 1895 he is still in armour;[2] in 1855 he published the first biography of Wagner. Another friend, Louis Köhler, must not be forgotten. These able men formed the first nucleus of the Wagner party, over which the newspapers excited themselves for so long. That it should ever have come to the formation of a "party" for Wagner, was simply a consequence of the intemperate attacks made upon him, and the systematic scoffing at his doctrines and his aims. Wagner himself detested all party spirit, and could be very angry at the absurdities committed by well-meaning but foolish partisans of his own. In 1857 he writes to Liszt: "An unhappy being has sent me another packet of nonsense and folly about my *Nibelungen*, and I suppose he expects me to answer and praise it! I always find that I have to do with apes of this kind when I look for men!" And in another place he cautions Liszt to throw over "the *coterie*, the alliance with idiots, who have none of them a notion what our real objects are." Even about Brendel's *Die Musik der Gegenwart und die Gesamtkunst der Zukunft* (The music of to-day, and the synthetic Art of the future) he expresses himself thus: "It is all very well, and those who can do nothing better may do this sort of thing; but I take no interest in it" (L., ii. 24).

Uhlig and Bülow.

Two friends deserve special mention. Through the quality of their talents and their personal relations to Wagner they are raised not only away from cliquism, but high above all parties; these are Theodor Uhlig and Hans von Bülow. Uhlig was a violinist in the royal orchestra, afterwards conductor in Dresden. He is the author of the pianoforte arrangement of *Lohengrin*, and of a large number of valuable articles in different periodicals, relating especially to Wagner's earlier Zurich writings, to Beethoven's symphonies etc.:—His was a remarkably fine intellect, not so much powerfully original, as receptive, and capable of assimilating impressions from without, and working them up into

[1] His treatise *Richard Wagner und das Musik-Drama*, although written in 1861, when no work of Wagner's second epoch had appeared on the stage, is of enduring value; his writings on *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan*, *Die Meistersinger*, etc., are all very instructive.

[2] Richard Pohl died on December 17th, 1896, while this translation was in the press. G. A. H.

something which, if not new, was at least original. At the same time he possessed sound critical judgment and artistic good-feeling. His character was on a level with his intelligence; his own interests were set aside that he might serve Wagner. After his early death in 1853 Wagner wrote to his widow: "the loss of just this friend is irreparable for my entire life. How orphaned I seem to myself! to whom shall I now tell those things for which I always found such a sympathetic refuge in the heart of my friend?" The best and most enduring monument has been raised to Uhlig, by the publication of Wagner's letters to him. Hans von Bülow presents the greatest contrast to Uhlig, but more in consequence of his character than of his gifts; in him we observe a similar intuitive receptiveness, combined with a choleric-sanguine temperament and restless aggressive energy. Hereby too his talents, which were greater in themselves, and were emphasised by his phenomenal musical capacity, came more to the front. Bülow was one of those rare men who give out every atom of what is in them, leaving no sediment behind, and are in this way related to genius. When Bülow came to Zurich, at the beginning of the fifties, the contact with such an extraordinary man could not fail to cheer and encourage Wagner. Bülow is probably the only man who had a right to bear the proud title of "pupil of Richard Wagner;" his eminent talent as conductor was developed under Wagner's tuition at the *Stadttheater* at Zurich. Later in Munich he employed his talent in Wagner's service; in addition to this he worked unremittingly with word, with pen and with artistic deed.[1]

Theodor Uhlig.

It was necessary to mention these friendships, for the magical power of the great man is fully reflected in the devotion of his friends; it brings his personality nearer to us than could any attempt at description. In the drama, the author does not describe his hero; he places him before us, makes him speak and act, and supplies the many things which can never be expressed thus, by showing his individuality as it is seen reflected in the eyes of others. Just so it is with life. The love of a Franz Liszt, the faithfulness of a Frau Ritter, the devotion of a Theodor Uhlig, the stormy zeal of a Hans von Bülow supplement all that we learn from Wagner himself; these are "documents" for the clear understanding of his whole life, and as such deserve a place with his writings, his works of art, and his actions.

Work in Zurich.

With the comparative rest of the Zurich years it is very easy to obtain a view of his creative work. When the Dresden May insurrection had cut the

[1] Far the best notice of Hans v. Bülow is that of Richard Sternfeld. Fritzch, 1894. See also Bülow's letters and writings, now in course of publication.

Gordian knot and Wagner was no longer bound to a world which he could only serve by enforced self-deception, the artistic fermentation within him reached its height. A closer examination of the course of his artistic development must be reserved for the chapter on his art-works. However tempting it may be, it is a dangerous thing to endeavour to bring the growth of an artist's works into genetic connection with the historical events of his life; the sources of artistic inspiration are for ever hidden from us, and although what we see of it upon the surface naturally manifests progress, like everything else that is living, this course of an artist's development is like life within a life. Points of contact there are enough between the two, but it is wonderful to see how the inner waves constantly break through the outer ones, in defiance of natural laws. Logic here fails; genius may be bound to the universal law of necessity, of cause and effect, but in what way this law here acts must be deduced from itself, not from its surroundings. Still we may perceive a symptom of this artistic fermentation in the fact that Wagner in the years 1848-49 carried a number of dramatic sketches within him, all of which remained unexecuted: *Friedrich der Rotbart* (a spoken drama), *Siegfried's Tod*, *Wieland der Schmied*, *Jesus von Nazareth* (word-tone-dramas), as well as other less matured dramatic ideas, such as *Achilleus*. The creative artist was just about to take a great decisive step—as Wagner says himself (iv. 261): "to pass from unconsciousness to consciousness;" there was dawning for him "the period of conscious artistic volition along an entirely new path," which he had entered upon "of unconscious necessity" (iv. 390). The period of conscious artistic volition is the second epoch. Of course a perfectly clear and complete view of his entirely new path could not be gained in a day; for this he required rest, retirement, concentration; the artist had to "think himself out." "I had to clear up a whole life which was behind me," Wagner writes to Liszt in 1850, "to bring before myself everything which had then dawned within me, to overcome the reflection which forced itself on me, by itself, by means of a close examination of its object, before I could clearly, cheerfully, and consciously throw myself again into the beautiful unconsciousness of creative art." Wagner therefore did not strike out any new line; the new path merely indicates that his former unconscious endeavours became conscious. "My latest views," he writes to Heine (U. 382), "are exactly the same as the old ones, only clearer, less chaotic, and therefore more human." He attained perfect clearness and freedom by a number of treatises which he wrote between the summer of 1849 and the summer of 1851, and in which he came to a thorough understanding with himself about art and the world: *Die Kunst und die Revolution* (Art and Revolution, 1849), *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (The Artistic-work of the Future), *Kunst und Klima* (Art and Climate, 1850), *Oper und Drama* (Opera and Drama), *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde* (A Communication to my Friends, 1851). He persistently set aside his longing for artistic production, as well as the admonitions of well-meaning friends, until he had quite "cleared up" his mind. At last he was able to speak the proud

words of his consciousness achieved: "as artist and man I now step forth to a new world" (iv. 390); and then at once the happy unconsciousness of artistic creation re-asserted itself; barely two months after the despatch of the MS. of the *Mitteilung* appears the first germ of the great world-embracing drama of the *Nibelungen Ring*. "Great plans with *Siegfried;* three dramas and a three-act prelude" (Letter to Uhlig of October 12th, 1851). And now we see Wagner, in spite of his weak health, which from this time became permanent,[1] displaying a creative activity which is quite astonishing. He worked without interruption from the autumn of 1851 to the autumn of 1859; the plan of the tetralogy was already completely sketched by November 1851; in December 1852 the poem was finished; one year later the score of *Rheingold* was nearly complete; *Die Walküre* took two years, the last strokes being added to the score in the spring of 1856; he then passed straight on to *Siegfried;* in June 1857 the entire first and second acts were ready in the sketch. Here there was an interruption, not in his work itself, but only in its object. From the summer of 1857 until the summer of 1859 Wagner composed the poem and the music of *Tristan und Isolde;* this is the first work which was completed during the "period of conscious artistic volition." Wagner himself did not feel that in *Tristan* he was leaving the region included in his great work the *Nibelungen;* on the contrary he regarded it "as supplementary to the great world-embracing *Nibelungen* Myth." At this time another figure arose before his mental vision, a figure which, through the "grand inter-connection of all true myths" was related by a thousand ties both to the *Nibelungen* drama and to *Tristan*—the figure of *Parsifal.* Not until a few years later was the preliminary sketch of the poem further developed, and not till twenty years had elapsed was the drama composed; *Parsifal* belongs nevertheless to the *Ring* and to *Tristan;* it also is in a certain sense supplementary, and we know that as early as the spring of 1857 this figure, both in the words and in the music, acquired a firm outline in the imagination of the poet (*cf.* Chap. iii.).

That is Wagner's life from 1849 to 1859. All so-called events are unworthy of mention in the presence of such deeds.

About the purport of his writings I shall have much to bring forward in my second chapter, and a few things about his art-work in my third. It remains for me to make one remark with regard to his writings, and to mention one single event, which had a forming influence on Wagner's whole life, before I close this section.

Wagner's writings.

I would like to bring home to the reader, how closely Wagner's writings belong to his life and his art; for herein lies not only their rare value, but more especially their *biographical* significance. The desire to explain himself to others was quite secondary in his mind, nor had he the slightest wish to build up a theoretical aesthetic system. His writings sprang from a subjective necessity, from his impulse "to bring forward everything which was dawning into full

[1] "When the mind's free, the body's delicate" (*K. Lear*).

consciousness." In May 1852 he writes to Uhlig: "I can only look back with any satisfaction upon the rôle which I have played in literature during the last few years in so far as I feel that I have by its means become quite clear to *myself*" (U. 187). For this reason, Wagner's Zurich writings have rather the character of soliloquies, and herein again lies the peculiar difficulty of understanding them fully. Once this is known, once it is realized that these literary works have not only an outward connection (*i.e.* as controversial writings), but also an inner relationship with his artistic creations; that so far from presenting an abstract system, they are the expression of a living organic process; that particularly in them the genesis of the artist is carried on and completed, the first step has been taken towards the full understanding of the writings, and at the same time a very important step towards the understanding of Wagner's personality. In saying this, however, we have not nearly exhausted the peculiar character of these writings, which are unlike any other productions of literature. They are at the same time controversial writings of great effect, a true challenge to battle, and besides this they are constructive works of such far-reaching import, that it will be long before the world has sounded their full depth. I may be allowed to quote the opinion of one of the most competent minds of our century, Friedrich Nietzsche, regarding these remarkable products of Richard Wagner's genius: "they excite, produce unrest; there is an irregularity of rhythm in them, which makes them, as prose, confusing. The discourse is frequently broken; its flow rather impeded than hastened by sudden starts of feeling; a sort of aversion on the part of the writer lies like a shadow over them, as if the artist were ashamed of the process of conceptual demonstration. What perhaps most offends those who are not quite at home in them, is an expression of authoritative dignity, which is quite peculiar to them, and difficult to describe. It seems to me as if Wagner often felt he was talking before enemies—for all these writings are composed in a talking, not a writing style, and they will be found to be much clearer when they are well spoken aloud—before enemies to whom he refuses all familiarity, and for this reason he shows himself reserved and supercilious. But not unfrequently the violent passion of his feelings breaks through the assumed impassibility; then the heavy artificial periods, loaded with qualifying words, disappear, and sentences and whole pages escape him which are amongst the most beautiful that German prose possesses."[1]

Schopenhauer.

Not long after the completion of these writings the event which I mentioned took place. Wagner became acquainted with the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. Perhaps we may call this the most important event of his whole life. The words which he wrote many years afterwards in a general sense are like the echo of his own personal experience: "The bewildered thinker can

[1] *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, p. 89. This work has already been mentioned in the general introduction as unquestionably the most beautiful which we possess about Wagner; it was written shortly before the first signs appeared of the fearful malady which shattered this splendid intellect, and made him the court-fool of a frivolous, scandal-loving *fin-de-siècle*.

at last stand erect and firm, upon the soil of true ethics; this we owe to the completer of Kant, the wide-hearted Arthur Schopenhauer." Wagner had suffered seriously from the want of a real philosophy; his poetic insight indeed afforded him a perception of the world deeper than that of any system, but he lacked "the concepts fully corresponding to his intuition." These Schopenhauer supplied (R., 66). In his need, in his inability to find satisfaction in an abstract word-philosophy, Wagner had already tried, with Feuerbach, "to seek the essence of philosophy in the negation of philosophy"; but here his feet lacked the firm soil of true metaphysics, and his uplifted eyes no longer discovered the mystic heaven of religion. Schopenhauer gave him both. "He has come to me in my solitude like a gift from Heaven," Wagner writes to Liszt. Now truly—in the happy year 1854—did full daylight shine in upon his soul; now, supported by this "wide heart," Wagner took his last step from unconsciousness to consciousness; complete rest, the unclouded pleasure of creating returned to Wagner's much-tried heart. He had attained the certainty of a fully mature character, and of a mind in perfect harmony with itself.

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2. 1859-1866.

General view.

R. Wagner, 1860.

In the last section I explained how Wagner was driven by circumstances gradually to dissolve his relations with the friends who were supporting him. His course was determined by his own genius; help he would accept, but he would not wear chains. Another circumstance now weighed with him: after so many years of silent uninterrupted work, he longed to hear some music, to experience the effect of his own works upon the stage. In 1857 he writes that in the absence of the freshening stimulus of a good performance of one of his works, his condition will in the end become unbearable (*cf.* L., ii. 174); in 1859 he exclaims in despair: "Art, art to drown myself in and forget the world, this alone could help me. . . . Children! I fear I shall be left too long in the lurch; the words 'too late' will come home to you some day in reference to me" (L., ii. 248). And he *was* left; his friends understood him no longer; just at this time he received the news that the King of Saxony had refused his application for pardon. And so, in the autumn of 1859, he forsook his "dumb, toneless asylum" in Switzerland, and threw himself once more into the waves of that world to which "in his inmost being he had long ceased to belong." The following years in Paris, Vienna and Munich brought twofold distress—artistic and material. The poet had longed for "art to forget the world"; but

he must conquer the art from that world which he would so gladly have forgotten; the world must provide the means, must itself be won for his cause. His early works indeed began to command the German stages; but to provide himself with the means of subsistence he was compelled to turn these very works into "merchandise," by consenting to miserable, unintelligent performances, through which the public too could only gain false impressions of his art and his artistic ideals. Or else he had with his own hands to mutilate the mature productions of his highest poetic capacity, by giving concert performances of fragments of the *music* of *Tristan* and the *Ring*, torn from the living dramatic organism to which it belonged—whereby friend and enemy alike reproached him with "want of principle"! That is to say, he was forced at every step to cut into his own flesh, to act contrary to his own unshaken convictions, merely that he might live and continue to compose, merely that now and again his own art might speak and infuse courage into him from the "dumb scores." Wagner complains of this terrible situation in the affecting letters which he wrote from Paris in 1860: "The tragedy for me lies in the fact that my most daring enterprises have to serve the purpose of providing me with the means of living. On this point all my friends, protectors and admirers still suffer from a blindness which fills me with despair and bitterness . . . how do you suppose that I feel when I look at a world to which I could be so much, and then at myself, and see how existence is made simply impossible to me? Believe me that no one can penetrate the depths of bitterness which a man like myself feels; that there is no help possible for the world in its stupid blindness—this world which only opens its eyes when the treasure is lost—believe me that I know it."[1] That is the tone of these restless, stormy years. Towards the close however the dawn of a new day broke in the sky of Wagner's life. Ludwig II. had ascended the Bavarian throne, and had stretched out his royal hand to protect the much-tried artist: "Es war Dein Ruf, der mich der Nacht entrückte" the *Meister* cried in the beautiful poem, *Dem Königlichen Freunde*, in which the past years of his deepest misery are described in such pathetic words.

"Was Du mir bist, kann staunend ich nur fassen,
Wenn sich mir zeigt, was ohne Dich ich war.
Mir schien kein Stern, den ich nicht sah erblassen,
Kein letztes Hoffen, dessen ich nicht bar:
Auf gutes Glück der Weltgunst überlassen,
Dem wüsten Spiel auf Vortheil und Gefahr;
Was in mir rang nach freien Künstlerthaten,
Sah der Gemeinhat Lose sich verraten."[2]

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[1] Unpublished letters to S. K. in the possession of M. Alfred Bovet.

[2] The following translation is given, not as a specimen of English verse, but merely to enable the reader to understand the meaning:

"What without thee, my friend, I question fate,
What, when I lacked thee, was my poor estate?
No star shone forth that clouds did not obscure;
No ling'ring hope but proved a mocking lure.
Forlorn I wandered through the callous world
To gamble on for profit or for loss!
What swelled the poet's breast was rudely hurled
Among the common herd as worthless dross!"

In the autumn of 1859 Wagner moved from Switzerland to Paris, where he resided until the summer of 1862. In 1861 he had been twice in Vienna, and had established a connection there with the Court Opera, which led him to change his residence to that town in the autumn of 1862. With the exception of the time occupied by concert journeys, which took him as far as St Petersburg, and by performances of his works in Pesth, Prague and other

Wagner, St Petersburg, 1863.

towns, Wagner remained in the Imperial city until the spring of 1864. As regards art, one hope after the other was here blasted; his pecuniary position was desperate; every attempt to rebuild his shattered fortunes failed. He soon forsook his newly founded home in Vienna; for a few weeks he wandered aimlessly about; he took refuge with old Zurich acquaintances (Herr und Frau Wille); then he travelled to Stuttgart; often he longed to retire from the world

altogether, but the duty of providing for his wife left no room for such a thought; "in helpless despair"—as he himself writes—he looked forward to the future. At this precise moment King Ludwig's message reached him. In the first days of May 1864 Wagner arrived at Munich; one stroke of the pen, and his worldly cares were ended; for his artistic future there opened out to him the prospect of a glorious day, free of all cares, radiant with pure joy. "I am to be my own uncontrolled master—not *Kapellmeister*—nothing but myself, and his friend. . . All cares are to be taken from me; I am to have what I require." This is how Wagner writes on May 4th, 1864. And yet how quickly did his cares return! The Munich episode did not even last so long as the Paris and Vienna episodes. In December 1865 the mighty monarch was compelled to banish his friend, not indeed from his heart, but from his vicinity. The cabals had again prevailed. But as usual they were managed very stupidly, and no one profited by their victory except Wagner; by his dismissal from Munich this distressing chapter of his life, which may be viewed as an attempt to renew relations with the modern theatre, is finished. Henceforward Wagner rarely assisted at performances in operatic theatres; when he did so, it was only temporarily, and for the sake of some special purpose; he was now finally released from the theatre, as well as from the necessity of trying vain experiments. Soon afterwards he built his own festival play-house in a remote corner of Germany. Till then—that is from the flight from Munich, 1865, till his establishment in Bayreuth in 1872—he lived in the beautiful "silent asylum" (ix. 373) in Switzerland, which had appeared dumb and toneless to him in 1859; he lived there happy and free and without care, entirely for his artistic work, as he could never have lived in Munich.

Paris. Wagner's residence in Paris (1859 to 1862) is known to the outside world by a single event, one indeed which was of importance in its consequences: the performances of *Tannhäuser* on the 13th, 18th, and 24th of March 1861 in the Grand Opéra. This was, as everybody knows, the occasion for unprecedented and scandalous scenes. The press had here, as elsewhere, raged vehemently against Wagner, and had found powerful allies in the gentlemen of the Jockey Club who had been cheated of their ballet. These two factions, supported by a hired claque, succeeded, by dint of whistling, shouting and howling, in entirely preventing the work from being heard, so that Wagner was obliged to withdraw it after the third performance. When we know the share which Germans bore in these scandalous proceedings; how the public itself took the part of the German *Meister* against the tyranny of the press and the plutocracy; especially when we consider *who* were Wagner's friends in Paris, we shall never fall into the mistake of supposing that the French showed less understanding for Wagner than the Germans.[1]

[1] As far as I am aware the name of Meyerbeer has never yet been publicly mentioned in connection with this scandal, by which his control of the Parisian stage was assured for another thirty years; but he was freely spoken of in Paris at the time. Wagner himself knew very well by whom the contemptible battle against him was led; he writes (x. 177): "I rejoice at my ill-success in

On the contrary, the residence in Paris brought him many pleasant experiences, in part of a kind such as he never met with in Germany. *Tannhäuser* was performed by the express command of the Emperor of the French: two years later the Berlin *Intendant* still refused to receive Wagner at all! It must be added that the order for the performance of *Tannhäuser* was issued without his having moved in the matter; in fact it was decidedly against his wish, as his letters of that time (partly yet unpublished) show very clearly. He very soon discovered the importance of court intrigues, and in the summer of 1860 he writes: "My greatest danger lies in the hatred of the Gräfin Walewska for the Fürstin Metternich"; in the same letter he continues: "Under no circumstances can I accept your earlier congratulations on my laurels in Paris. I have long ago regretted having ever entered upon an undertaking of this kind, with all its consequences."[1] And how favourably did the manner in which the rehearsals of *Tannhäuser* were conducted in Paris contrast with the methods of German theatres! Wagner himself says: "Everything that I wished for was purchased at once, without the cost ever being considered. The *mise en scène* was prepared with minute care, such as I had no notion of before." He also praises "the careful diligence, quite unknown amongst us, with which here (in Paris) the rehearsals at the piano are conducted," and "the unsurpassably beautiful way in which the pilgrims' chorus was sung and put upon the stage." The Paris public he praises as possessing "a lively receptiveness, and a truly wide-hearted sense of justice"[2] (vii. 187-191).

When Wagner declares that "the recollections which he retained of his stay in Paris were for the most part of the pleasantest kind," the reason is that here for the first time in his life he found himself appreciated at his true value. Even now, in his own fatherland, the mighty poet, Richard Wagner, is often regarded as "only a musician"; those who do not consider themselves musical take no notice of him at all, and those who are musical often think it not worth while to consider whether the performances which they hear of his works are good or bad, whether the red pencil has left any

Paris. Could I have been pleased at a success purchased by the same means as were employed by my alarmed and secret antagonist?" In accordance with a very common system of tactics, the attempt has frequently been made of late years, to represent the attitude of the press, the aristocracy and the plutocracy, as a mere demonstration against Napoleonism. That is to throw dust in the eyes of the public. For it was just the papers which supported the Emperor—the *Figaro* at their head—who agitated against Wagner, and who tried, amongst other things, to brand him as a republican, whilst many of the independent organs, and of those which were written by born Frenchmen, fought manfully on his side. Wagner's *Judenthum in der Musik*, and the opinions which he expressed about Meyerbeer in *Oper und Drama* had more to do with the scandal than any sudden fit of desire for freedom on the part of the Parisians.

[1] From letters in the possession of M. Alfred Bovet.

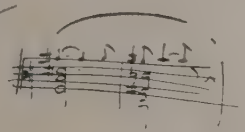
[2] An account of the hundred and sixty-four rehearsals for *Tannhäuser* in the Grand Opéra has been written by M. Charles Nuitter, the librarian of the Grand Opéra, and will be found in the *Bayreuther Festblätter*, 1884.

dramatic coherence or not; they only want to enjoy the music.[1] In Paris on the contrary, immediately after Wagner's first concerts, a circle of enthusiastic admirers collected round him; few or none of these were musicians, but many were amongst the most eminent poets, authors, painters and historians of art; besides these were doctors, engineers and politicians — all men who joined Wagner, not as musical enthusiasts, but because they felt with more or less distinctness that here a new artistic ideal was coming forward, and that the extraordinarily powerful effect of this music was not only due to its melodic and harmonic substance, but to the fact that in a certain sense it embodied a poetic intention. What Schiller had required, that music should "become form," had here been achieved, and the mind of the Frenchman, receptive as it is for form, saw it at once. The Frenchman felt enthusiasm for Gluck at a time when his music was tabooed in his fatherland, when the sister of Frederic the Great could say of it that "it stank." Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was performed in a masterly way in Paris, when in Germany it was as good as unknown; and now there arose a circle of enthusiastic men who divined the extraordinary importance of Wagner's genius, and at least had a presage of his artistic aims. It was a small circle, but it included some of the best names, and it offered Wagner that which he had not yet found in Germany, except with Liszt and Bülow —*reverence*. Wagner himself testifies to the deep intelligence of these foreigners. "What had been revealed to my French friends, and what my German artistic contemporaries and critics still looked upon as the ridiculous chimeras of my arrogance, was in reality an art form, which, while differing entirely both from the opera and from the modern drama, surpassed them both, inasmuch as it alone fulfilled their best aspirations, and bound them together into one free ideal whole" (vi. 382). As far back as the year 1853 the well-known authoress Contesse Gasparin wrote: "A day will come—how soon I know not—when Wagner will be enthroned as undisputed ruler of Germany, and of France too. Perhaps we shall not live to see the glory of this dawn; no matter! if only we have greeted it from afar!" Read the enthusiastic articles of the great poet Charles Baudelaire, and hear this literary purist of the strictest order, this pupil of Theophile Gautier, everywhere calling attention to the *admirable beauté littéraire* of Wagner. How truly does Baudelaire perceive the close relationship between Wagner and the great dramatists of Greece! but he knows too that Wagner—unlike Gluck—does not live in the dream of a renaissance of the antique, that he is just the contrary, the creator of a new form, the artist of a fermenting future.[2] For an example of more musical, and so to speak theatrical understanding, read the essays of the Doctor Gasperini, which were afterwards collected and published in book-form (1866). A wonder-

[1] To mention a single example of the cuts which are common in Germany: *Tristan und Isolde*, Act II., König Marke: "Trotz Feind und Gefahr, die fürstliche Braut brachtest du mir da: die kein Himmel erlöst, warum mir diese Hölle?"

[2] Baudelaire's essays on Wagner will be found in the third vol. of his *Oeuvres complètes*.

Tand. 6 Mai 1861.



Richard Wagner

fully striking, and quite intuitive insight into the soul of the German master was possessed by Champfleury;[1] his little treatise *Richard Wagner* tells in barely fourteen pages so much that is true and deep that it may supply the place of a whole Wagner library. Frédéric Villot, the Keeper of the Imperial Museums has, as far as I am aware, written nothing about Wagner, but he possessed an astonishingly accurate acquaintance with both the words and the music of Wagner's works and soon became his confidential friend and adviser: the famous essay *Zukunfts-Musik* (Musik of the Future) is addressed to him. Nuitter, the well-known librettist, deserves credit for the translation of *Tannhäuser;* so too does the unfortunate Edouard Roche, who died at an early age. Looking further into this circle we meet with the names of famous poets, such as Auguste Vacquerie and Barbey d'Aurevilly: of artists, like Bataille and Morin; authors of note, like Léon Leroy and Charles de Lorbac; politicians like Emile Ollivier, Jules Ferry and Chalemel Lacour (the translator of *Tristan und Isolde*). Some journalists of the first rank are also found supporting him manfully: Théophile Gautier, Ernest Reyer, Catulle Mendès, and above all the celebrated and formidable critic of the *Journal des Débats*, Jules Janin, the gentleman who suggested a new coat of arms for the Jockey Club: "Un sifflet sur champ de gueules hurlantes, et pour exergue: *Asinus ad lyram!*" Nothing is gained by multiplying names; we need only emphasise the one thing which stamps this Paris episode as of enduring importance in Wagner's life—that is, not the wretched story of the *Tannhäuser* performance, and of its massacre by Albert Wolff, the brothers Lindau, David, and other individuals of the same calibre, but the enthusiastic recognition which he won from the *élite* of really important, independent men.

Charles Baudelaire.

One more name I must mention from this Paris time. One noble woman, Marie von Muchanoff, *née* Gräfin Nesselrode—long an enthusiastic votary of the *Meister*, and now resident in Paris—carried on the traditions of his faithful Zurich friends and came to his assistance at one of those moments when nothing but unconditional generosity is of use. In this case the deed was all the more noble because Frau v. Muchanoff was not herself wealthy. True, she regarded her friendly deed—which she kept carefully secret—not as a sacrifice, but as a valued privilege; all the more does her name deserve to be entered in the golden

[1] Champfleury was poet, painter and sculptor; when he died a few years ago he was artistic director of the great porcelain factory in Sèvres.

book of the truly faithful. It was from Paris that Wagner wrote of himself as "a man who has been widely loved and admired, but about whose actual existence not a soul really troubles himself."[1] This reproach does not apply to Frau Marie von Muchanoff; she did trouble herself about Wagner's existence. Sad to say, this faithful and devoted friend died a few years afterwards; she never saw Bayreuth, but—to use Comtesse Gasparin's words—she "greeted the glorious dawn from afar." In Paris, too, Wagner met the celebrated authoress of the *Memoiren einer Idealistin*, Baroness Malwida von Meysenbug. He had already formed a slight acquaintance with her in London in 1855, and from this time forward she was one of his most valued friends.

Frédéric Villot.

Vienna.

Of the Vienna years there is little at all, and still less that is edifying to relate. Beethoven (whom the Viennese like to regard as their own) once exclaims in his own blunt way: "Cursed be the life here in this Austrian barbarism!" This peculiar mixture of southern frivolity and northern ponderosity, in which neither the brilliant talents and intuitive sense for form of the Latin races, nor the depth and sterling qualities of the Germans have any part; this "Austrian barbarism," Wagner now learned to know by painful experience. When he reached Vienna, he heard his own *Lohengrin* for the first time in his life. The exultation of the public throughout the performance was indescribable; deeply moved, the *Meister* expressed his thanks at the close: "Allow me to strive after my artistic aims. I beg you to support me by preserving your favourable feelings towards me." It was this "truly impressive" reception which led Wagner to further undertakings in Vienna, whereby he soon learned that not even a fraction of the whole public would provide him with the slightest support; the enthusiasm had been a passing excitement, such as the Viennese delight in; for the aims of Wagner's art, not one of them cared a bit. Beethoven did not owe his livelihood in Vienna to the enthusiasm of the Viennese, but to the artistic sense of Hungarian magnates and Bohemian feudal noblemen. These traditions had long ago been lost, and besides, Wagner's art afforded no soil for patronage; it required a people, or a king. Here, however, there was neither people nor king; except for a few genuine Germans belonging to the middle classes, his life in Vienna was quite isolated; he had to push his lofty artistic aims alone and without any support, against theatrical conditions which were amongst the most corrupt in Europe, and in the teeth of a press which

[1] Unpublished letter in the possession of M. Alfred Bovet.

stood morally on a level with the theatre, but which at the same time went to work more cleverly and was more conscious of its purpose.

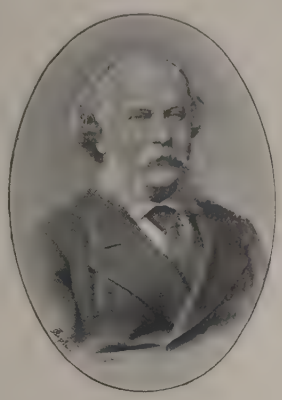
The troubles of this time all turned about a projected performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, which after all never took place. As *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, and *der Fliegende Holländer* had drawn the public, and proved to be "*Kassenstücke*" (*i.e.* paying pieces), the authorities of the Imperial Opera were glad to have Wagner's latest work. But directly they discovered what a task they had set themselves, when they realized the high degree of artistic perfection which the composer required in the performance, their only aim was to extricate themselves from their obligations. A writer who was himself a daily witness of all the events of these years in Vienna says: "Incompetent management, intrigues of the singers, diatribes in the newspapers, want of discipline and the untrustworthiness of important agents, all united to harass the nerves of the unfortunate composer. Wagner was kept in suspense by promises in the shabbiest way. Various excuses were put forward to pacify him. In the first year it was always the news of the expected convalescence of Ander (the tenor); then it was broken engagements, and negotiations with singers, of whose fitness no serious judge would entertain a thought. Their clear duty, which was to engage a singer competent to undertake the title *rôle*, the directors never could or would see. Their word, which had been pledged to the composer, was gradually withdrawn. An artist existed at that very time whose whole heart was set upon the creation of Tristan, and who was equal to the task, both as regarded the volume of his voice and his poetic mastery of the character: Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld. Wagner had mentioned his name to the authorities in Vienna, and urged them strongly to engage him; they paid no attention to his wish."[1]

I do not think that Wagner's whole life contains another episode so piteous and miserable, so hopelessly barren, intellectually and artistically, as these Vienna years. What advantage could a Richard Wagner derive from the great success of his concerts in Vienna, Prague, St Petersburg, and Moscow? They provided him with money, but with nothing else. Wagner's "Sybaritic life" in his little house in Penzing, near Vienna, supplied the newspapers with inexhaustible matter for moral indignation against the great poet. We hear of silk and velvet, of champagne suppers and so on. Supposing these accounts to have some foundation, they would still, at most, only bear out what has already been said. In his silent asylum in Switzerland, the lonely forsaken artist had been able to look out upon the Alps; they spoke comfort to him; in Paris he might feel that he was amply repaid by the admiration and friendship of the most eminent intellects for all the injustice which he had received; later, in Munich the faithful friendship of the King, and the affection of Schnorr made up for everything; but here in Vienna, in the capital of "real frivolity," as Wagner afterwards called it, there was nothing—no comfort, no worthy diversion, no "asylum" for the poor tortured heart, for genius driven almost to the verge of despair; there was

[1] Gustav Schönaich, in a series of articles in the *Weiner Tageblatt*, 1892.

nothing—except frivolity. It is possible that Wagner may have resorted to the advice of his favourite poet Hafiz. Cause enough he had with him to wish that the sad lamp of reason would pale. The intellectual and moral quagmire of his surroundings is mirrored in his despair, but the creative impulse in his soul did not stagnate, and to finish the sublime work which he had already begun—*Die Meistersinger*—he needed another atmosphere. He fled from Vienna.

Amid the countless number of those who had so loudly extolled him in Vienna, one single really sympathetic figure stands forth, that of Doctor Standthartner, afterwards first physician at the Vienna General Hospital. Nothing in Wagner's whole life is more beautiful than these friendships, awakened one after the other by the magic of his art and of his personality, and remaining without exception firm and true until death. Standthartner, too, had to endure much for and through his great friend, but his attachment was never shaken, nor did Wagner's gratitude ever grow cool. Of this relation "broken only by death" Doctor Standthartner's stepson writes: "it affords the most beautiful and undeniable evidence of the warmth of Wagner's heart, and of his steadfast adherence to his friends."[1] Peter Cornelius, who was then living in Vienna, and also Tausig proved truly devoted friends during those unhappy years.



Dr Standthartner.

Munich.

One more heavy trial Wagner had to endure before he could escape from the hideous life of our great cities, and retire into the glorious world of his own fancy, there to bring forth such works as *Die Meistersinger*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*. For the nineteen months in Munich, from May 1864 to December 1865, though contrasting in every way with the years in Vienna, were a tragic time. His poverty indeed was over, but with a mind like Wagner's this only supplied more soil for his artistic requirements; his pleasure was not in having, but in giving; "the world owes me the little bit of luxury which I require," he had once remarked, but now, when the anxiety for his daily bread was removed, when he was allowed his "little bit of luxury," there was but one consuming wish—to give to the world what he conceived that he owed it; his full artistic capabilities, everything which he saw so clearly, and which he—and he alone—was able to call at once into life, if only he had free hand. Even with performances at Zurich, when everything was against him, Wagner had gained a great opinion of his "skill in making the impossible possible," but now means of every kind were to be placed at his disposal. There could be no doubt about what he had to do; on the one hand completely to reconstruct the modern operatic stage, and on the other to reveal to men a new art, undreamed of before—the word-tone-drama. His intensely practical nature, which compelled recogni-

[1] Gustav Schönaich, *ibid.*

tion even from his enemies; his experience of the stage, which at that time already extended over nearly fifty years, enabled Wagner at once to find the ways and means which would lead to his end. Perfect performances, with the materials then available, would, he thought, first show what could be attained by real, earnest, ideal effort, and strict, workmanlike handling of the artistic elements; these performances would especially educate the public, and show by examples the difference between true and false art. At the same time a German school of music was to be founded in Munich on new principles, to train German artists —both singers and instrumentalists—to the fulfilment of their new task, by imparting a firmer technical basis, and wider intellectual education; finally, a festival play-house was to be erected, in which not only the obvious faults of our monstrous opera houses—which seem built neither for seeing nor for hearing —should be removed, but an attempt should be made, gradually to solve the problem of the "theatre" in a new way, in a way corresponding to our new requirements. With restless energy Wagner commenced his work. The newspapers, which here as everywhere fell upon the great man with unprecedented violence and meanness, had again much to tell of his "extreme Sybaritic tastes." The *Augsburger Allgemeine* writes, "An Oriental Grandseigneur need not hesitate to take up his permanent abode in Wagner's house." I am afraid the oriental Grandseigneur would have been put out of breath by the mere sight of such an incredible amount of daily labour. For what Wagner accomplished in this short space is simply fabulous. Of the extensive plans enumerated above, some were already accomplished, all the rest were in a fair way towards being carried into execution, when suddenly Wagner had to yield to his enemies, and after these few months' residence to leave Munich at the wish of the King. After some very satisfactory introductory experiments with *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*, the ever memorable performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, the first stage-festival-play (*Bühnenfestspiel*), had taken place on June 10th, 1865; on March 31st of the same year Wagner had submitted to the King his comprehensive report on a German school of music to be erected in Munich,[1] and in April the commission entrusted with the execution of the scheme had commenced work. Gottfried Semper, the first architectural genius of our century, and one of Wagner's oldest friends, had arrived in Munich; the King had commissioned him to build a monumental festival play-house, and that no time might be lost, it was agreed that as a provisional measure another building should in the meantime be adapted for the purpose. It must be mentioned, however, that this does not by any means represent the whole of Wagner's activity during these short months: in 1864 appeared one of his most important essays, "*Uber Staat und Religion*" ("On the relations between the State and Religion"), of which Nietzsche very truly remarks: "it compels a silent, inward, devotional contemplation, such as one feels at the opening of a precious shrine." Soon afterwards the same ecstatic

[1] This report, which marks an epoch in the history of German music, has been included in his collected works, vol. viii.

mood produced the first detailed sketch of *Parsifal*, whilst all this time the score of *Die Meistersinger* was progressing vigorously. These are the works to which Wagner may point if it be asked whether he justified the confidence reposed in him by his royal friend, and merited that of the Bavarian people. But if we exclude his own artistic work for a moment, and ask ourselves what portion of all his other efforts in Munich—his efforts for the world, in the world and with the world—has remained, we must answer; nothing at all. What the years in Dresden had been on a small scale, the months in Munich were on a large one. The leading powers of our society showed not the slightest sign of intelligence; they thwarted all the plans of the *Meister;* nobleman and citizen, court, press, plebs, all joined the standard of mediocrity against genius, and cried with one voice, "Stone him!" Even the monarch had to yield to superior force. The building of the festival play-house was stopped, the school of music (in Wagner's sense) came to nothing: the performance of *Tristan* (like that of *Die Meistersinger*, which took place under very similar circumstances in 1868) remained a solitary event—a kind of *monstrum per excessum*—in the annals of the opera, without result, still-born, as far as the theatrical life of Germany was concerned. For this reason the time at Munich was one of the bitterest experiences of Wagner's life; here his fondest hopes were brought to nought; here was enacted the third and last act of the tragedy: Paris—Vienna—Munich.

But the real positive gain of this time was carried away by the banished master himself. He had tried to serve the world with the sacrifice of all his powers; the world rudely rejected his service, but he received the reward of the truly selfless; what he had tried to create for the happiness and the glory of others brought glory and happiness to himself. Cabals and hatred had only confirmed the King's friendship for Wagner; under the protection of his august friend the exiled artist was to enjoy in complete seclusion from the world, the happiest, most peaceful years of his life. With his "ideal popular theatre" the public of Munich would have nothing to do;[1] in its place the shamefully misunderstood *Meister* was to build a festival play-house to his own eternal glory in Bayreuth. These gifts were reserved for the future, but Wagner saved two others, no less precious, out of the wreck of these years so inglorious for Germany; the love of Ludwig II. and his experiences in the performance of *Tristan*.

King Ludwig.

For Wagner's life, King Ludwig's influence was similar to that of Schopen-

[1] That this may not be denied at the present day, when Munich looks with envy upon Bayreuth, two short passages may be quoted: the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* writes on January 25th, 1867: "Now the building of the ideal 'people's theatre' will be taken up again more vehemently than ever. We think, in common with many experts, that with the first stone will be laid the foundation stone of a ruin." On February 19th, 1869, the same paper writes: "We should hail the day when R. Wagner, together with all his friends, should be really crushed, and should turn his back on the good and true city of Munich and on all Bavaria." I have purposely chosen to quote from the time after the war of 1866, and when Wagner had long ceased to live in Munich; these are no longer the vulgar attacks on his person of 1865; they are the expression of the calm, well-considered judgment of the most highly respectable newspaper of Bavaria—and of the "experts!"

hauer. Schopenhauer had supplied him with "the conceptions for his intuitions," that is, with the only thing which he needed in the domain of philosophy, and therewith Schopenhauer had given him rest after the storm, the safety of secured possession, and the possibility of extending it. From King Ludwig Wagner received the material resources, if not fully to realize his artistic ideals, at least to produce such intelligible exemplars that his objects became clearly manifest. The *Meister* himself was from this time onwards no longer "to gamble on for profit or for loss"; a strong arm protected him from the grim army of philistines, those "mean, cowardly poltroons who are yet so cruel and so tied to their habits" (L., i. 96); and in protecting him the King became, in a similar sense to Schopenhauer, his fellow workman, a decisive portion of Wagner's own life. That the *Meister* was able to complete his *Nibelungen Ring*, his *Meistersinger*, and his *Parsifal*, and to have them performed, we owe to King Ludwig; the festival play-house in Bayreuth, the symbol into which Wagner's whole artistic being is concentrated, is equally a monument to the glory of this exalted monarch. What gives its true significance to the deed of Ludwig II. is the fact that with him there was no idea of ordinary "protection" of art, such as monarchs regard as a duty incumbent on their rank, nor was it, as was said at the time, a sentimental fancy for music. King Ludwig was a man of unusual parts; his abilities were those of the greatest artists. The first impression of Wagner's music had induced him thoroughly to study Wagner's writings, and so far from finding in them anything democratic, socialistic, or revolutionary, such as had led Graf Beust to regard the author's mere return to Saxon soil as dangerous to the state, this proudest of princes had discovered in them a truly royal ideal. Without ever having seen Wagner, he was seized with a deep, glowing, and, as the future showed, immutable love for the man who had created *Lohengrin* and written *Eine Mitteilung an Meine Freunde*. Not because he raved about him, but because he recognized his supreme importance, did King Ludwig call Wagner to Munich. Perhaps this prince was the very first man who knew exactly *who* Wagner was, and *what* he wanted. "He knows everything about me, and understands me as my own soul. . . . He knows perfectly who I am, and what I need; not one word did I have to lose about my position," Wagner wrote in May 1864.[1] Of Liszt—the only other man who could be considered at this time—such an understanding for Wagner's aims could not be asserted. Liszt was so great an artist that a single work sufficed to reveal to him Wagner's importance in art, but nowhere do we find him paying any attention to his great friend's art-doctrines, to his views on the position of art in modern society, on regeneration, etc.—doubtless he had little sympathy for them. Wagner himself bears witness to it. "My thoughts Liszt does not understand; my actions are distinctly distasteful to him" (U., 44). Liszt's faithful affection deserves all the more acknowledgment; but were we to confine the meaning of the word *friend* to one who understood him "as his own soul," then King Ludwig is certainly

[1] Letter to Frau Wille.

Wagner's first, and almost his only friend. Speaking in 1872, Wagner said, "What this king is to me, goes far beyond my own existence; that which he has helped on in me, and with me, represents a future which spreads in wide circles around us, which stretches far beyond what is ordinarily understood by social and political life; a high intellectual culture, a step towards the highest destiny of which a nation is capable—that is expressed in the wonderful friendship of which I speak."

The attempt has been made, and is still made, to represent the beautiful friendship which existed between the King and Wagner in a totally false light. The friendship of the King, it is said, was not sincere; the King had a character incapable of devoted affection. Wagner tried to misuse his position for political purposes, etc. etc. The mere fact that these stories and accusations contradict each other ought to prove how little foundation they possess. Several memoirs however, written quite seriously of late years, have tended to revive the old fables. One man declares that Wagner carried on "a national policy, founded on an understanding with Prussia"; another that he was "full of aversion to Prussia," and so it goes on. The claim to rest upon "personal recollections" does not give the slightest weight to these different tales, for the "recollections" of people who were at the time but very imperfectly informed regarding the real course of events, and who were quite incompetent to judge them rightly, do not gain value by keeping. It is a strange fallacy to suppose that gossip which has lain for fifty years in the cellar of an understanding, never very clear, should afterwards afford valuable material for history. Wine may gain body by age, recollections never can. Genuine documents relating to this tragic time in Munich will some day be published. But they are not in the least necessary to enable us to form a true judgment of the relations between the King and the *Meister*, and to show the falseness of the old wives' tales about the political intriguer Wagner. As far as the King is concerned, twenty years of unflagging, self-sacrificing fidelity have proved his "sincerity" and his "devotion"; of Wagner himself we already possess printed letters enough—to say nothing of his writings—to afford ample information about his actions. These only confirm what we might conjecture without their aid. King Ludwig not only admired Wagner's music, but also loved and honoured his personality, as he never loved and honoured any other man; he recognized in Wagner a spirit towering far above his surroundings and above his age, and it was inevitable that, whether he wished it or not, the artist should exert an influence upon the monarch. It is not necessary to assume that actual advice was given; still less to imagine political combinations; the mere presence of such a man influences every thought. And when we find Wagner (after his departure from Munich) writing such words as these: "The time of trial for the King has arrived; he will endure it. When you see him become stronger, exclaim with me: Hail to Germany!"[1] then we know in what direction his silent influence made itself felt. Just as natural as the King's love for

[1] Letter of December 24, 1865 to G. Wittmer (*Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 1894, p. 226).

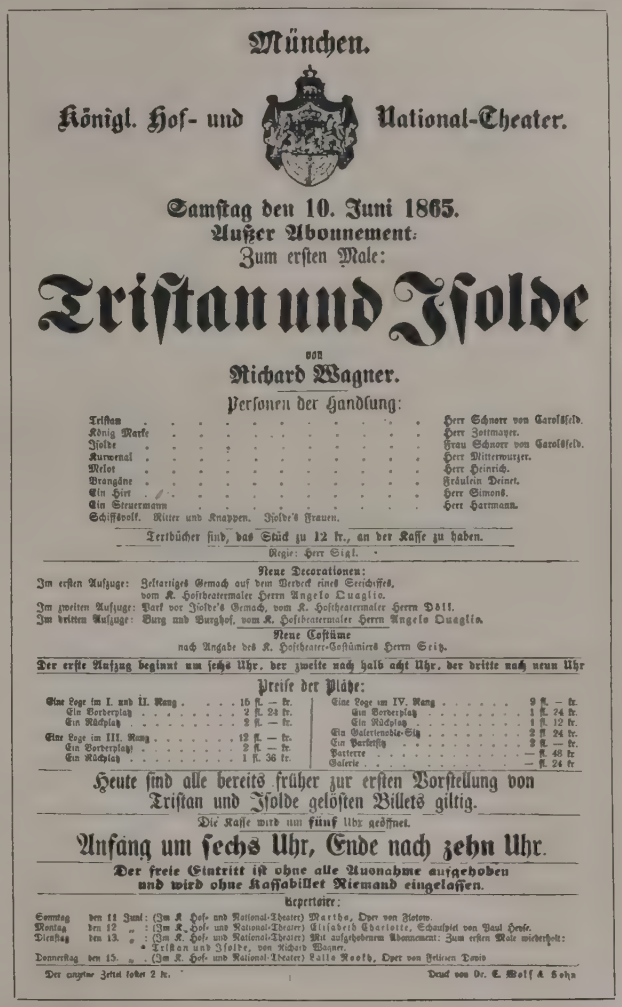
Wagner, was the hatred which the mighty ones at court felt for him, a hatred nourished by the fact that Wagner very properly repelled every attempt to misuse his position to influence the King. The insupportable situation in which Wagner at last found himself appears in his letters, and they also prove the accounts of his political ambition to be simple lies. In 1864, only a few months after he came to Munich, we already see him filled with evil apprehensions; his penetrating mind had soon realized that he was here in a *situation sans issue*. "From the time of my first call to Munich, full of promise as it was, I never for a moment doubted the fact that the soil provided for the realization of my new art-tendencies did not belong to me or to my tendencies"—so he writes in vol. viii. p. 254 of his collected works. What should he do? In an impressive letter of February 1865, in which Wagner gives expression to his longing for rest and seclusion, he continues: "Whenever the wish to withdraw into the narrower limits which alone would bring me rest grows uppermost in my mind, I cannot but shudder at the thought of relinquishing him to his surroundings. I tremble to the depths of my soul and ask my dæmon: why this cup to me? why, at a time when I require rest and leisure for uninterrupted work, am I entangled in a responsibility in which the welfare of a man of heavenly gifts, perhaps the future of a country, are laid in my hands? How shall I save my heart? How am I still to be an artist? He lacks every person who is necessary to him! . . . My longing for the last rest is unspeakable. My heart can no longer endure this dizziness."[1] In March 1865 he writes to Roeckel: "I long to be away—in a beautiful corner of Italy—strange—as *lazzarone*—to nurse my poor nerves; but how can I desert this young king in his odious surroundings, while his soul is marvellously bound to me? This is how it stands! What ought I to do, and what shall I be able to do? I keep asking myself this and know as yet of no answer, nor can any human being give me one! I am too tired!" (R., 83). Other letters of 1866 testify how painfully the King was affected by Wagner's resolve to reside no longer in Munich. The King had only contemplated a temporary withdrawal and conjured Wagner to return, but he was not to be moved. He writes: "It cost me a terrible struggle with my feelings to abide by my resolve, and to announce my intention to this splendid young man. But—so it will now remain."[2] That Wagner longed for a strong and united Germany, cannot, as I have said, be doubted; in this same letter he writes: "One thing is becoming more and more clear to me—with Germany's re-birth and well-being, the ideal of my art stands or falls; herein alone can my art flourish!" and in June 1866 he writes to Graf Enzenberg: "Only that Germany which we love and desire can help to realize my ideal."[3] It is quite beyond doubt that this German feeling, which King Ludwig found not only in Wagner's writings, but in his entire life and action, exercised a determining influence upon him in the critical

[1] Letters to Frau Wille, February 26th, 1865.

[2] Letter to Julius Fröbel of April 11th, 1866, Lucerne (*Vom Fels zum Meer*, 1894-95, Hft. 1).

[3] *Allgemeine Musik Zeitung*, 1885, p. 460.

days which were soon afterwards to decide the fate of Germany.[1] To exert this influence Wagner had no need to organize conspiracies; he had only to be what he was, a German poet and thinker; whoever understood him was under his influence. This was the case with King Ludwig. I was compelled to enter into this question in detail. The anonymous slanders which Wagner's person and character had to endure from the press can be treated with contempt, and left to be forgotten, but we cannot allow the relations between him and the King to be misrepresented and falsified; for here quite different interests are involved; "historical lies" have a charmed life, and many a person had no other object in slandering the artist than that of vilifying the King.



München.

Königl. Hof- und National-Theater.

Samstag den 10. Juni 1865.
Außer Abonnement.
Zum ersten Male:

Tristan und Isolde

von

Richard Wagner.

Personen der Handlung:

Tristan	Herr Schnorr von Carolsfeld.
König Marke	Herr Zottmayer.
Isolde	Frau Schnorr von Carolsfeld.
Kurwenal	Herr Mitterwurzer.
Melot	Herr Heinrich.
Brangäne	Fräulein Deinet.
Ein Hirt	Herr Simons.
Ein Steuermann	Herr Harrmann.

Schiffsvolk. Ritter und Knappen. Isolde's Frauen.

Textbücher sind, das Stück zu 12 kr., an der Kasse zu haben.

Regie: Herr Sigl.

Neue Decorationen:

Im ersten Aufzuge: Zeltartiges Gemach auf dem Verdeck eines Segelschiffes, vom K. Hoftheatermaler Herrn Angelo Quaglio.
Im zweiten Aufzuge: Park vor Isolde's Gemach, vom K. Hoftheatermaler Herrn Döll.
Im dritten Aufzuge: Burg und Burghof, vom K. Hoftheatermaler Herrn Angelo Quaglio.

Neue Costüme

nach Angabe des K. Hoftheater-Costümiers Herrn Seitz.

Der erste Aufzug beginnt um sechs Uhr, der zweite nach halb acht Uhr, der dritte nach neun Uhr

Preise der Plätze:

Eine Loge im I. und II. Rang	16 fl. — kr.	Eine Loge im IV. Rang	9 fl. — kr.
Ein Vorderplatz	2 fl. 24 kr.	Ein Vorderplatz	1 fl. 24 kr.
Ein Rückplatz	2 fl. — kr.	Ein Rückplatz	1 fl. 12 kr.
Eine Loge im III. Rang	12 fl. — kr.	Ein Galerieabde-Sitz	2 fl. 24 kr.
Ein Vorderplatz	2 fl. — kr.	Ein Parterresitz	2 fl. — kr.
Ein Rückplatz	1 fl. 36 kr.	Parterre	— fl. 48 kr.
		Galerie	— fl. 24 kr.

Heute sind alle bereits früher zur ersten Vorstellung von Tristan und Isolde gelösten Billets giltig.

Die Kasse wird um fünf Uhr geöffnet.

Anfang um sechs Uhr, Ende nach zehn Uhr.

Der freie Eintritt ist ohne alle Ausnahme aufgehoben und wird ohne Kassabillet Niemand eingelassen.

Repertoire:

Sonntag	den 11 Juni:	(Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Martha, Oper von Flotow.
Montag	den 12 „ :	(Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Elisabeth Charlotte, Schauspiel von Paul Heyse.
Dienstag	den 13. „ :	(Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Mit aufgehobenem Abonnement: Zum ersten Male wiederholt: * Tristan und Isolde, von Richard Wagner.
Donnerstag	den 15. „ :	(Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Lalla Rookh, Oper von Frl. Ida David

Der einzelne Zettel kostet 2 kr. Druck von Dr. C. Wolf & Sohn

FACSIMILE PROGRAMME OF FIRST PERFORMANCE OF TRISTAN UND ISOLDE.

About the performance of *Tristan und Isolde* on June 10th 1865 —"more wondrously beautiful than anything that was ever seen," says Wagner—I cannot here speak in detail; only I must point out its great significance in Wagner's life. It was his first opportunity of putting all that he had taught about the value of a *perfect* theatrical performance, to practical proof, particularly his opinion concerning the special "Stimmung" (frame of mind) both actors and public would be plunged into by a "festival performance" outside the usual humdrum repertoire. Moreover it was the first performance of any work

Tristan and Isolde.

[1] It is stated on credible authority that King Ludwig more than once appeared suddenly in Triebschen in the course of the summer and autumn of 1870.

belonging to the period of his full maturity, *i.e.*, to the second half of his life, in which he "consciously" created a new dramatic form—the word-tone-drama. In the invitation which Wagner issued to these performances we read: "The performances are to be regarded as art-festivals, to which I am permitted to invite my friends from near and from afar; they will therefore be quite distinct in character from ordinary performances in the theatre, and will depart entirely from the usual relations between theatre and public . . . the question this time is not between pleasing and not pleasing—the wonderful modern theatrical game of hazard—but is simply whether artistic problems, such as I have set myself in this work, are capable of solution or not, in what way they must be solved, and whether it is worth while solving them. I must lay stress upon the fact that the last question can never mean whether such performances will be productive of

Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

pecuniary profit, for this is how success or non-success are understood now-a-days, but rather whether works of this kind, when perfectly performed, are capable of making the intended impression upon the educated human mind; we are therefore concerned with the solution of purely artistic problems. . . ." The performance was consequently a decisive act, even though the public at large may not have understood its full import—no matter; the real public was here the *Meister* himself. The day of the principal rehearsal, May 11th, 1865, is an important date in Wagner's life; the direction of the orchestra was from the first in the hands of Hans von Bülow; the *Meister*, who in the numerous previous rehearsals had arranged everything on the stage himself, down to the minutest details, now withdrew and witnessed his work from the back of one of the boxes. This was his reward for the whole misery of the Munich time, in which he again and again longed for death as his only release. At the same time it was—as it was bound to be for such a character as his—a stimulus for him to solve new problems. Now he could pass on to the founding of festival plays with the certainty of victory.

In connection with these Munich performances, two names deserve special mention: Hans von Bülow and Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld. Hans von Bülow

LUDWIG SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD

had been called to Munich at Wagner's request. With regard to the score of *Tristan und Isolde*, Wagner testifies that Bülow had "caught his intentions down to their finest nuances," and he calls him his artistic "second self." Schnorr von Carolsfeld was the greatest singer that Germany ever possessed—not because his voice surpassed those of all others, but because he was a real genius, an artist who in Wagner's judgment might fairly be ranked with a Kean and a Ludwig Devrient. "In recognizing the unspeakable importance of Schnorr for my own artistic work, a new spring of hope entered upon my life," Wagner writes. And regarding the death of this unique singer, which took place scarcely a month after the performance of *Tristan*, he says: "What I lost by the sudden death of this admirable artist was in a certain sense impossible to estimate; his gifts were inexhaustible. In him I lost, as I expressed myself at the time, the great granite block, which I had now to replace by a number of bricks to complete my building." We need add nothing to this.

During these years of wandering, 1859-1865, there was a pause in Wagner's artistic productivity; the works which he was engaged upon have already been mentioned; it is remarkable however that nothing was completed during this stormy time.

On December 10th 1865, Wagner left Munich and betook himself to Switzerland; a few weeks later he rented a house in the neighbourhood of Lucerne, standing quite isolated on a point of land on the banks of the lake: Hof Triebschen. Only once after this, in the summer of 1868, did Wagner perform a work in Munich; it was *Die Meistersinger;* at other times he avoided the town as much as possible; in the performances of *Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, which took place soon afterwards, he had no share.

TRIEBSCHEN.

3. 1866-1872.

Wagner's second marriage.

Happiness has no history. The six years which Wagner spent in Triebschen, from the spring of 1866 till the spring of 1872, we may call the happiest of his whole life, but also in a certain sense the least eventful. Perfect happiness is akin to childhood and innocence; it is only conceivable away from the terrible struggle for existence; but, like the child, it wears armour, it is cased in an impenetrable shell; it can neither be pried into nor examined nor handled. Happiness is a secret. As Wagner had formerly said of Weber, so do we now feel a desire to rescue Wagner himself from "the gaping eyes of admiration, and leave him where he may rest in the arms of love" (ii. 62). Let him who wishes for a deep view into Wagner's heart during this time hearken to his *Siegfried Idyll;* in Wagner's Autobiography this music is the page which tells us most. Let us recall the preceding thirty years of his life: in 1836 Wagner was in Magdeburg; in the spring the unhappy performance of *Das Liebesverbot* took place; then came Königsberg and the thoughtless marriage, which brought so much bitterness and misery; Riga with its close atmosphere of Philistinism; the time of want in Paris; the destruction of one hope after another in Dresden; the long years of banishment in the "soundless asylum," lastly the desperate and unsuccessful battle of the good against the bad in Paris, Vienna, and Munich; and now, all at once, rest and peace; at his side a companion, worthy and competent to comfort him for all the reverses of fortune, and at the same time a strong support for the art-work of his life—and in her arms a son! "A wonderfully beautiful and vigorous son, whom I can boldly call Siegfried; he will prosper with my work, and give me a new long life, for life at last has found a meaning."[1]

The most important event of this time has now been named: Wagner's

[1] Letter to Frau Wille, dated June 25th, 1870.

second marriage. His first wife, Wilhelmina Planer, had died in Dresden on January 27th, 1866. She had retired several years before to her native city, Dresden. A serious development of an old heart complaint made it impossible for her any longer to share the incessant excitement of her husband's life; especially the *Tannhäuser* year in Paris had exhausted her strength. And now, just at the moment when the years of rest were to begin, years of happiness which one might well have wished the unfortunate sufferer to enjoy, she died. Frau Wilhelmina Wagner was a good, true and courageous woman; all who knew her testify to this; she possessed too, as country folk say, "as much brains as a body need have." But she belonged to the very numerous class of "people of two dimensions"; spotless in morals, possessed of a healthy understanding, but quite without depth, either of heart or of head. A wife *intellectually* competent to follow Wagner's aims would indeed have been difficult to find, but the passionate, immovable faith which a woman bestows so lavishly, so entirely against all better judgment upon the one she loves, might have been granted to a Richard Wagner. Such women he often met in the course of his life. "With the female heart my art has always prospered," Wagner writes to Uhlig, "and that is probably because, in spite of all the vileness that prevails, women still find it difficult so completely to harden their souls as our citizen men are able to do. Women are the music of life, they receive everything more openly and unconditionally into themselves, and beautify it with their sympathy" (U., 19). Unfortunately his own wife was an exception; she did not possess that "genius of the heart" which is so beautiful an ornament of her sex. A pattern wife at the distaff and spinning wheel, she did not beautify the path of Wagner's sorrows by sympathy, by instinctive understanding for his distant aims; on the contrary, she was the first obstacle that he always encountered. In his very difficult relations to the outer world she was in one sense the enemy in his own camp. "I will have no reconciliation with baseness, nothing but war *à outrance*," he had exclaimed in his exile; his wife desired reconciliation; she would have liked to see him give way everywhere; she knew not his genius, nor the loftiness of his character. She clung to Wagner with the loyalty of a good woman; but she had not *faith* in him; that says everything. The tender affection and patience which Wagner preserved for thirty years towards his wife is a beautiful and noble trait in his life. Even in the distress of the Zurich years he regularly supported her parents; he permitted no one to express a single slighting word about his "Minna"; her excellent behaviour during the first residence in Paris has been sufficiently dwelt upon above. But that this "obstinate marriage" (as Wagner calls it himself) not only plunged him into outward misery, but was the source of daily and hourly torments, is evident. Rarely does a word escape Wagner's lips upon the subject, but when it does, it reveals an abyss of misery. So, for instance, in 1852, when he writes to Liszt that he *must* obtain for him the permission to come to Weimar. "I should find an element of encouragement, a stimulus for the artistic conditions of my life; perhaps, too, here or there a word

of love would reach me,—but so—here? Here I must rapidly go to ruin" (L., i. 199); and again to Uhlig, that he would give "all his art for a wife who loved unreservedly" (U., 147).

On another occasion Wagner wrote to Liszt: "Ah! dearest, dearest, *only* Franz! Give me a heart, a mind, a woman's soul into which I can plunge my whole self, which can grasp me entirely—how little should I then require from this world" (L., ii. 19). And this heart, this mind, this soul he now received; that was the happiness of the years in Triebschen, the happiness of his life for which he had waited so long, and, strange to say, Franz Liszt it was in very deed who gave it to him! Cosima Liszt, the daughter of the friend in whose breast his art had found a first home twenty years before, became Wagner's wife. Three human beings, and only three, played such a decisive part in Richard Wagner's life that if any one of them had been wanting it would have shaped itself in an essentially different way; they are: Franz Liszt, King Ludwig, and Cosima Liszt. All others, even the greatest, are of secondary importance; secondary I mean with respect to the grandeur of Wagner's aims, and to the incalculable importance of his achievements for German art. Even the greatest talent only fills a place which another would have filled a little better or a little worse; but these three figures are the pillars on which the work of his life reposes. Especially is this true of the last of the three; for to her it was reserved to continue his life's work after his death. Whether we should ever have known festival plays without Cosima Liszt is doubtful; they would certainly have ceased after 1883, and so the great deed of Bayreuth would have died away without result, almost as completely as did *Tristan* in Munich. An innovation such as that of the Festival performances requires a long time to strike into the soil, and before it can begin to exercise a modifying influence upon the aesthetic tastes of whole nations. Only one person was competent to continue the task of Bayreuth. But also in another sense, and that the most decisive of all, she helped to establish the life work of her husband; she bore him a son: "he prospers with my work, and gives me a new long life." With regard to the intellectual capacities of this great woman, I will only cite Wagner's own judgment: "She is a woman possessed of the rarest gifts in an unheard of degree; a wonderful image of Liszt, but intellectually superior to him."[1] When Wagner wrote these words, his future consort was the wife of Hans von Bülow; she showed the heroism of her heart in following the higher duty which she felt so clearly. Here too I will quote Wagner's own words: "Into my asylum has since fled the one who was to testify that there was indeed help for me, and that the axiom of so many of my friends—that I could not be helped—was wrong. She knew that she could help me, and did help me; she defied all calumny, and accepted every condemnation."[2] But now condemnation has given way to reverence and admiration; for even the most

[1] Letter to Frau Wille, September 9, 1864.

[2] Letter to Frau Wille, June 25, 1870.

foolish must see that here a higher power was at work, and a holy duty had to be fulfilled.

Creative activity.

During the quiet years at Triebschen, Wagner displayed a creative activity which was simply incredible, just as he had done before in Zurich. A witness of that time states that he generally worked without interruption from eight o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon. Here he composed the greater part of *Die Meistersinger*, and completed it; he also completed *Siegfried*, and composed nearly the whole of his mighty *Götterdämmerung*. At the same time he again began to display great activity as an author; not to mention many smaller writings, three of his most important works were written at this time: *Ueber das Dirigirin* (On conducting), *Ueber die Bestimmung der Oper* (On the real aims of the opera), and above all, *Beethoven*. The last is metaphysically the deepest essay that has issued from Wagner's pen. The artist here examines the metaphysics of music, not by the way of abstraction, but by the light of Beethoven's art, and in doing this he reveals to us the profoundest being of this mightiest and most unapproachable artist. He also superintended a second edition of *Oper und Drama*. This treatise is dedicated to Constantin Frantz, the well-known German politician, who, in his enthusiasm for Wagner's Zurich writings, had written to him: "Your overthrow of the state is the foundation of my German Empire." Wagner shows by this very clearly in what sense the political remarks in these writings are to be understood. A second edition of his *Judenthum in der Musik* was published with a detailed introduction, in the form of a letter to his noble-hearted friend Marie von Muchanoff, to whom he now dedicated the pamphlet. In Triebschen too he commenced the publication of his collected works and poems.[1]

The war of 1870.

The peaceful happiness of Triebschen—the Siegfried Idyll—was brought to an end by the Franco-German war. Wagner was waiting for the re-birth of Germany; "only the Germany which we love and desire can help to realize my ideal." The victorious war appeared to him like the inauguration of the re-birth for which he had tarried so long. The restoration of a united Germany, the coronation of a German Emperor, these promised him the Germany which he loved and desired. With poem and song he accompanied the deeds of arms of the German army,[2] and in the intoxication of his enthusiasm he exclaimed:

> "Es strahlt der Menschheit Morgen;
> Nun dämm're auf, du Göttertag."[3]

Now Wagner entered upon the holiest duty of his life. It was to dedicate the sum and the outcome of his entire existence to the German people. As early as

[1] In connection with this the name of his courageous publisher, E. W. Fritzsch in Leipzig, must be mentioned with honour.

[2] *For the 25th August 1870; An das Deutsche Heer vor Paris, Eine Kapitulation, Der Kaisermarsch* (with the concluding chorus: "Heil dem Kaiser König Wilhelm!").

[3] "This is the golden promise of humanity,
Now dawns the morning of a Godlike day!"

November 1870, long before the war was finished, he writes: "As far as the outer world is concerned I have one more thing to accomplish, the performance of my Nibelung work as I have conceived it." But it was not only a matter of the *Nibelungenring;* above all it was the creation of the ideal German stage, a stage which should have nothing to do with commercial considerations and the strife of interests, the creation of that purely German dramatic style, for which the great German poets had always looked with longing and despair. Now at last the moment had arrived when the work must succeed; in undertaking it Wagner put the final stroke, not only to his own work, but also to that unexampled development which German art had undergone during more than a hundred years in the works of its poets and composers (*cf.* chap. II., sect. 4). "I have now merely to unveil the edifice, which, though unknown, has long stood ready in the German mind, to tear off its false robes and leave the ragged envelope to moulder away in the breeze, and its last shreds to be absorbed in the vapours of a new and purer artistic atmosphere."[1] For this reason too he writes in the letter mentioned above: "I must now prepare myself to attain a good old age; this will benefit many besides myself."[2]

As was usual with all Wagner's undertakings, things progressed with astonishing rapidity. Before Bayreuth was finally settled upon as the home of the festival plays, the details of the edifice were already planned in Triebschen; so was the stage machinery. In January 1872 the last difficulties with respect to the site in Bayreuth were overcome; at the end of April the family moved from Triebschen to Bayreuth, and on May 22nd, 1872, the foundation stone of the festival play-house was laid.

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4. 1872-1883.

The festival-plays.

From this time forward Wagner's home was in Bayreuth. Here, after almost forty years of incessant fighting, his art likewise found an enduring home. The centre was firmly established from which its beneficent influence could defy all opposition, and spread little by little over the whole of Germany and far beyond, as in the ovum the formless mass collects round the fertilized nucleus and gradually acquires the shape of living matter. In his speech at the laying of the foundation stone, Wagner said: "this is the essence of the German nature, that it builds from *within*"; quite within—namely, geographically the central point of Germany is Bayreuth. In the shadow of his festival play-house, here "where his fancies found repose," Wagner built his own house "Wahnfried." Here he lies buried.

For the external view of these last years of his life, only a few dates are necessary; what they tell is so sad and comfortless, that details will scarcely be

[1] Report to the German *Wagnerverein*, December 1871.

[2] Letter of November 25th, 1870. See *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1894, p. 15.

WAGNER'S HOUSE, *WAHNFRIED* IN BAYREUTH.

required to complete the story. In May 1872, on Wagner's nine and fiftieth birthday, the foundation stone of the festival play-house was laid. Wagner-societies had in the meantime come into existence, and a *Patronat* was to provide the means necessary to carry the plan into execution. The first festival plays were fixed for 1874, but the funds came in so scantily that the building progressed very slowly, and, but for higher intervention, would have had to be stopped altogether. At last, in 1876, the first German festival plays took place; the great master-work of Wagner's life, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*—"undertaken full of confidence in the spirit of the German nation, and completed to the glory of his exalted benefactor, King Ludwig II. of Bavaria" (so runs the dedication)—was performed three times. The interest in the festival plays remained however confined to such a small circle, and the press had worked so assiduously to scare away all lovers of art who were still hesitating, that a tremendous deficit was the result, and, as the supposed *Patronat* was at once scattered to the winds, the burden fell entirely upon Wagner's shoulders. Once more the "exalted benefactor" saved his friend from absolute ruin. In the year 1877 a second *Patronat* was organised; its object was especially the institution of the Bayreuth school, and in connection therewith the periodic repetition of the festival plays. As the theatre was built, the pecuniary requirements were now inconsiderable. But everything turned out, if possible, even more wretchedly than the first time; the pupils were frightened away by the press, and by the attitude of the official musical circles; the funds provided were so absurdly insufficient that nothing could be done with the money. One precious year after the other passed away. Alone, in the distant Bayreuth, sat the mighty artist, "whose like we ne'er shall see again." Germany had no employment for her great son! Not until Wagner's new work, *Parsifal*, was immediately in prospect, and curiosity was thus aroused, did any deeper interest become noticeable; this showed very clearly how little the public understood the fundamental idea of the festival plays. The small capital which had been gathered gradually in the course of six long years—the bulk of which was again made up of single contributions, prominent amongst them being that of the generous Hans von Bülow—enabled the *Meister* at last, in 1882, to put his *Parsifal* into scene and have it performed. Although the results of these second festival plays were financially not very brilliant, at least the capital was not quite swallowed up; there remained a festival fund, which since then has constituted the financial basis of the Bayreuth plays. Amongst the lovers of art a very gradual, but very noticeable, reversion of feeling soon began to show itself, and so it was possible to announce a repetition of the festival for the next year, without the aid of a *Patronat-Verein*, which Wagner wished should be dissolved. These third festival plays, however, he never lived to see. Though his mind appeared to be as fresh as it was fifty years before, and his body as vigorous and active as that of a youth, the privations and struggles of a life had told upon his physical organism; the deep pain of finding his "Bayreuth" still

misunderstood, even when it was achieved, contributed to cut short his life before the time which seemed appointed for it. From 1879 onwards Wagner was obliged to spend the winter in Italy; he died suddenly in Venice on February 13th, 1883, of rupture of the heart. His end was worthy of his life; death found him in the midst of his work.

The last years.

I have intentionally put off the consideration of the idea of the festival plays until the last chapter; here it would come too soon, for experience has sufficiently shown that those who do not know Wagner's ideas, who have not grasped the essential and distinctive character of his art-work, are incapable of comprehending the intention which lies at the bottom of them. For such the building is a "Wagner Theatre," or at best a "Model theatre." To understand Bayreuth one must be at home in Wagner's whole way of thinking and feeling.

Palazzo Vendramin.

This simple remark indicates the tragedy of these last years of his life. Wagner had imagined that he had "only to unveil" an edifice long extant in the German mind; but the German, as he returned from his victories, was thinking of other things than art, and Wagner especially was quite a strange figure to him. He only knew him from bad, mutilated performances of his works, after they had been trimmed for operatic purposes,[1] and from articles in a press which itself had no notion what the question at issue really was, and whose guiding star was its instinctive and unbounded hatred of Wagner. Of Wagner's writings the German knew next to nothing, and without the living impression of his art (the real art, of course, not the false art), they could not but be incomprehensible to

[1] Wagner writes to Liszt: "I know with absolute certainty that all my 'successes' are based upon bad, very bad performances of my works; that they consequently rest upon misunderstandings, and that my public fame is not worth an empty nutshell" (L., ii. p. 41).

the majority. This ignorance is the only explanation and the only excuse for the really disgraceful course which events took in Bayreuth, and which led the man who in 1870 had sung:

"Now dawns the morning of a day divine,"

at Christmas 1879 to confess that he now no longer could hope (x. 40).

The world universally regards Wagner's last years as an unprecedented instance of success and fame and happiness. Outwardly this has some truth, and also in a deeper sense, in so far that Wagner certainly did not live and suffer in vain; ever wider circles are still forming round Bayreuth, the centre of his art. But this view of the *man* Wagner, with whom we are here concerned, shows a total ignorance of his aims. Never has a man lived who cared so little for what we call fame and success. Time after time he exclaims in anger: "The devil take all their fame and honours! . . . I do not wish to be famous!" and constantly he finds fault with his friends for informing him of "successes." "I care not a straw for so-called success!" I know that many people regard this contempt for fame and success and honours as insufferable arrogance; however this may be, it was a conspicuous trait in Wagner's character. To the last, Wagner remained a plain German man. Enthusiastic for his fatherland, enthusiastic beyond all bounds for his art, happy in the possession of a creative faculty such as has only been possessed by the greatest in all times, his heart swelled with the consciousness that he was a discoverer of new lands, and a guide to them, a born commander and a conqueror. Wagner was as far from arrogance as any great man ever was. For himself personally he had but one wish; to know that he was loved. When, on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, all sorts of ovations were brought to him, wound up by a performance in the theatre "for the benefit of needy musicians," Wagner declared that he himself was the most needy of all musicians, for he needed real love. And now, in spite of all so-called success and fame, he saw himself really not understood, misunderstood, his artistic ideas scoffed at, his person exposed up to the last to malicious ridicule. Can we doubt that for such a wide heart as his, for a heart of such delicate fibre and so thirsting for love, this was a pain far beyond what we can feel with him. Only in the highest heights of thought, when the world and its miseries disappear from the view, only in the deepest recesses of the heart, when the love of a few atones for the ingratitude of a whole people, could he find comfort in his old age. The love of individuals he now certainly possessed in a very high degree. The three great ones: Franz Liszt, King Ludwig, and the noble-hearted consort of his last years were faithfully by his side till his death. His son was growing up before him, full of promise. Of Wagner's own contemporaries, Comte de Gobineau, the famous French diplomatist, artist and scholar, was peculiarly qualified by his own eminent accomplishments, to be a real friend. The first incentive to much in

Wagner's last writings came from him.[1] Of the younger ones I will only mention the poet and thinker, Heinrich von Stein, who died young. Others are still living and labouring amongst us. In the numerous Wagner societies, too, there arose an enthusiasm which, though it had more to do with revelling in music than with any deep love for Wagner, yet became the means whereby many a good man was brought to a closer and more salutary relation with the *Meister* and his aims. Above all Wagner always drew fresh strength for life from his "trust in the German genius." He had sometimes to confess that he had no more hope, and yet he did not despair. With the apostle Paul he had learnt to hope against hope. From his earliest utterances down to his very last, we continually meet with this "trust in the German genius"; but it had a further meaning; it was trust in the genius of humanity at large. As far back as 1848 Wagner had required "a complete regeneration of human society"; this had, for one moment, led to his identification with the political revolutionaries; the thought had gone on deepening with him as his own world experience grew wider, and as he withdrew himself more and more completely from all concern with politics. His matured practical philosophy was now developed in the principal treatise of the very last years of his life, *Religion und Kunst* ("Religion and Art," 1880), which was accompanied by a series of smaller writings dealing with single questions: *Was ist Deutsch?* (What is German?), *Wollen wir hoffen?* (Shall we hope?), *Heldenthum und Christenthum* (Heroism and Christianity), and others. The confession of faith runs: "We believe in the possibility of regeneration, and devote ourselves thereto in every sense" (x. 336). In another place I shall have to return to this doctrine of regeneration, and deal with it in detail; here it is merely to lead us to a right understanding of an important trait in Wagner's character—his unflinching *faith*. Without this faith the whole course of Wagner's life is inconceivable;—faith led the unknown penniless German youth from Riga to Paris;—faith caused him in his lonely exile to plan and carry out a gigantic work, which he knew that none of the theatres would ever perform;—faith induced him to lay the

Comte de Gobineau.

[1] The most important works of the Comte de Gobineau are: *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines, Histoire des Perses, Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie central, Traités des écritures cunéiformes, Nouvelles Asiatiques, La Renaissance*, etc.

foundation-stone of the Bayreuth festival play-house without the slightest prospect of ever being able to obtain sufficient means to finish it. This was not mere faith "in himself." If the fundamental idea of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration is that humanity is destined to develop itself in harmony with nature, then this defiant, triumphant faith rests upon the knowledge that he himself—in his life-struggle, in the products of his genius—was acting in harmony with a higher order of things, that he was led by a providence. Hence this strange mixture of childlike simplicity and sovereign self-assertiveness. Wagner was in common life so inimitably simple and confiding that one might often feel tempted to speak of his *bonhomie* (German: *Biederkeit*); but suddenly a light would spread on his countenance; the features seemed to be transformed, the eye shone as if it perceived an angel of God bodily before it; nobody could resist the impression that here a higher voice was speaking, that some unexplained connection really existed between this man and a transcendent world, otherwise inaccessible to us. The faith of such a man—whether he be in the common sense of the word a believer or not—*must* be deeply religious; it is not otherwise possible, for he is himself the most eloquent and the most convincing manifestation of the divine in us. We feel towards the works of a Shakespeare, a Beethoven, or a Wagner as towards a miracle; and Wagner testifies that he himself stood before a completed art-work of his own as before an enigma (R. 65). That this religious side of his being found more expression in the old man living away from the world, than it did when he was younger and still fighting his way through the midmost throng of battle, is natural. A sort of transfiguration takes place here. The assertion that Wagner became religious in his old age can only provoke a smile. When in his so-called revolutionary time he violently attacked a degenerate church, he proved by so doing his deep "religiousness"; St Francis, Luther, and Savonarola did the same. On the other hand it is remarkable how, out of this sharply defined existence of a double personality, this immediate participation in another world alluded to a moment ago, one peculiarity of all real works of artistic genius becomes intelligible; namely that the real creative work of the artist has only a very loose connection, or generally no connection at all, with the external events of his life. In the miserable years of Paris and Vienna were composed the gay poem of *Die Meistersinger* and the music of the most lively scenes of the first act; the terrible world-tragedy of *Götterdämmerung* again was composed during the peaceful idyll of Triebschen. For this reason I am very far from wishing to bring *Parsifal*, the last great work of the master, in any way into genetic connection with these impressions and experiences of the last years of his life. The figure of the "pitiful one" appeared before his mind in the tranquillity of Zurich; in Munich, amidst intrigues and cabals, at the moment when Wagner was supposed to be trying to get the Government of Bavaria into his own hands, the complete sketch of the drama was made; one year before his death the music was completed. But this we may say: for the completion of

this noble and luminous work, which was to win for Wagner even the hearts of his sworn enemies, these last years form a wonderful harmonious background. The removal from the world, the rapture of pure love, the draining of the cup of sorrow to its last dregs . . . these were the conditions under which *Parsifal* was completed and performed in 1882. This last earthly happiness Wagner lived to see: he heard the glorious closing song

"Höchsten Heiles Wunder:
Erlösung dem Erlöser!"[1]

Soon afterwards he too was redeemed; "his fancies found repose," as he had written on his Bayreuth home, but only in the grave.

Concluding observations.

Looking back now at this sketch of Richard Wagner's life, I see that it is entirely confined to its inward aspect, as indeed to my thinking it was obliged to be. To the possible objection therefore that I have not "portrayed" Wagner, I reply that it was not my object to do so. The German builds "from within," says Wagner. A man portrays himself best—by his life, by his works and his words. If I am successful in the course of this book in leading the reader to a right understanding of the "inner" man, then the true Richard Wagner must gradually come into life before his perception. Only one thing is wanting—the physiognomy in which this individuality is reflected; a physiognomy which in its expressive changefulness is little suited for immovable delineation by painting or photography. The reader will however find in this book the best pictures of the master. I beg that he will regard them by the light of the *inner* man. "What struck me most particularly in this mighty countenance, teeming with energy, next to the inexpressible brightness of the eyes and the penetrating look, was the expression of infinite kindliness which played round the lips, and which no portrait can render," so writes a French authoress.[2] Certainly this physiognomy can only be comprehended by one who has penetrated the secret of the heart.

Regarding criticism I have already spoken in the General Introduction. Light spreads itself through the whole universe, awakening life; shadow does not pass beyond its own limits. Besides, in considering a character, the so-called "faults" occupy a peculiar position; when for instance certain evil characteristics—as with Wagner the unmeasured violence of his temper—are but the necessary concomitants of the noblest qualities, the reverse side as it were of higher virtues, who shall call them faults? Violence of temper, which may lead to momentary acts of injustice, often accompanies the possession of extraordinary energy, coupled with excessive artistic receptivity; when these qualities are removed, the "fault" disapppears, not otherwise. The same is true of the extravagance with which Wagner is reproached. Never does one find moderation in such things in a great artist. The musical genius, if he only hears and

[1] Oh high and holy miracle!
Redeeming the Redeemer!

[2] Judith Gautier. *Richard Wagner.*

does not see, like for instance Beethoven, neglects himself to a degree which is almost repulsive. Mozart, on the contrary, the dramatist, lived very much through his eye. "Coarse linen is the most abominable thing in a man," he thinks; he is "burning with desire to possess silver shoe-buckles"; a red frock-coat "tickles his heart quite cruelly"; how expensive it will be he does not know, "because he has only considered the beauty of it, and not the price." What beauty and splendour mean to an artist is just as incomprehensible to a dull ordinary mind, as it is incomprehensible to a pedant in dressing-gown and slippers, that Rubens could only paint in full gala-dress with his sword by his side. Or shall we call those qualities faults which obstruct the path of the artist, and frequently neutralize the success of his deeds in a sensible degree? With Wagner such would be the exaggerated feeling of gratefulness which caused him throughout his entire life to feel himself under an obligation to people who had done him some small service—often too not from the purest motives; the mischief caused by such dubious friends, whom he could not bring himself resolutely to shake off in proper time, is not easy to estimate. But let the word be understood as it will, I am quite persuaded that Wagner had many "faults." As Frederick the Great writes to Voltaire: "Le plus parfait tient toujours à l'humanité par un petit coin d'imperfection." Wagner no doubt possessed more than one "petit coin d'imperfection." "By the side of that German *Meister*, all other men are but stuffed dolls," a Spaniard remarks *à propos* of his having met Wagner. Allowing for the exaggeration of a Southerner, what he says strikes me as very true. Wagner lived more intensely than other men: it was as if a different blood, a warmer blood flowed in his veins; certainly nothing human, not even human weakness, was unknown to him. But to my mind a catalogue of his faults would form a part of that detailed "portrait," which is not the object of this book; nor is it necessary, for the faults follow quite of themselves when we once know Wagner well. But we can only know him well by loving him; there is no other way. It is for this reason that I have laid so much stress upon Wagner's sufferings. The thinker teaches us that all real love is sympathy (*Mitleiden*). And only when we realize how continually Wagner suffered, how his sufferings were caused by the selflessness of a nature striving for ideal ends—for ends perhaps for ever unattainable—only then "is our eye fitted to see truth" (as Tristan says); only then do we begin to learn *who Wagner was*. Had Wagner been a mere musician, seeing nothing beyond his art; or had he been a mere innovator in the domain of art, we might have been content to praise him as far as he deserved; but exactly as in the artist Wagner music is the winged Pegasus, raising the poet to heights unreached before, so, too, is Wagner's art the potent voice of a mighty man, to whom "nothing human was strange"; of a hero throwing himself courageously into the battle array of fermenting society; of a reformer who points the way from an unholy to a holy world. Art is, according to Wagner, for our life here on earth what Christ is for our life hereafter in heaven, a kindly Saviour; to

this faith he would convert all men. Whether one approves of all Wagner's doctrines and all his acts is a question of very small moment; for the present we have only to recognise clearly that his aim was high and pure, and that as a brave and noble knight he strove fearlessly for what he in his heart of hearts thought true.

In the evening after Wagner's death, the gondolier who had usually taken him out was found lying on the steps of the Palazzo Vendramin and weeping bitterly; he refused all comfort, saying: "He was so *good* a master! I shall never find so good a one again!" Thirty years earlier Bülow had written: "Hardened as it is by all the wretchedness of life, my heart melts and begins once more to throb!" The artist and the gondolier both understood Wagner, for both loved him. And I am convinced that neither the most acute critical vision, nor the most enthusiastic admiration for the musician and dramatist will suffice for the knowledge of Wagner; by the heart alone can this great heart be understood.

Appendix

Chronological Table and Summary View of Richard Wagner's Life

THE arrangement of this table aims rather at simplicity than at completeness, its object being to give a general view. Moreover, the outer aspect of the life only has been taken into consideration; for instance the writings (of which I have only named the most important) are indicated by the dates of their publication; the dates at which they were written will be found in the Appendix to Chap. ii.; as to the dramatic works, I have generally only given the dates of first performance; the very complicated history of their composition is given in the Appendix to Chap. iii.

The reasons for the division of the life into two halves, each consisting of four periods, have been explained in the introduction to this chapter.

First Epoch

I

1813. Richard Wagner born on the 22nd May in Leipzig.
Friedrich Wagner, the father of Richard Wagner, dies on November 22nd.

1814. Richard Wagner's mother marries the actor Ludwig Geyer. The family moves to Dresden.

1821. Ludwig Geyer dies on September 30th.

1823. Wagner enters the Kreuzschule.

1825. Wagner composes a prize poem on the death of a school-fellow; it is the first thing of his which appears in print.

1826. Wagner translates three whole books of the Odyssey as "extra private work."
He learns English, "in order to gain an accurate knowledge of Shakespeare."
He begins to sketch tragedies on the pattern of the Greek.

1827. He begins a work which lasted two years; a great tragedy "pretty nearly composed of Hamlet and Lear" (i. 8).
Moves to Leipzig; enters the Nicolai Gymnasium.

1829. ? Wagner writes a pastoral play, "music and verses together."
First instruction in music.

1830. Wagner enters the first class (*Prima*) of the *Thomasschule*.
He composes for full orchestra. A performance of his "*Paukenschlag*" Overture in the *Hoftheater* on December 24th.

1831. Wagner enters the Leipzig University.
He studies counterpoint and composition with Weinlig, the *Thomascantor*.

1831. First appearance of compositions by Wagner in print (a sonata and a polonaise, the latter for four hands, both for piano; publisher: Breitkopf).
Wagner arranges Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for two hands.
1832. An Overture specially composed by Richard Wagner for Raupach's tragedy, *König Enzio*, is played in the Leipzig *Hoftheater*.
First performance of a composition of Wagner (D minor Overture) in the Leipzig *Gewandhaus*.
First performance of a Scena and Aria by Wagner in the Leipzig *Hoftheater*.
1833. Performance of Wagner's C major Symphony in the Leipzig *Gewandhaus* on January 10th.

2

1833. Wagner is appointed *Chorrepetitor* in Würzburg.
1834. On January 1st he completes his first great work for the stage—*Die Feen*.
Die Feen refused for performance in Leipzig; Wagner appears before the public for the first time as a literary author, with an essay, *Die Deutsche Oper*, in which he demonstrates that the Germans have neither a German Opera nor a German Drama.
In July he is appointed *Musikdirector* at the town theatre in Magdeburg.
1835. Adolf Wagner dies on the 1st August.
1836. Solitary performance of Wagner's *Liebesverbot* on March 29th in Magdeburg.
After the breaking-up of the Magdéburg Company, Wagner travels to Königsberg, where soon afterwards he becomes *Musikdirector* at the town-theatre.
Marriage with Wilhelmine Planer on November 24th.
1837. In August Wagner becomes *Kapellmeister* at the *Stadttheater* in Riga.
Rosalie Wagner, Wagner's eldest sister, dies.
1839. Wagner travels at the end of June by ship *via* London to Paris with his wife.

3

1839. Reaches Paris on September 18th.
1840. } The series of tales: *Das Ende eines Deutschen Musikers in Paris*, etc., published.
1841. }
Revolution against the public art of the present day.

4

1842. Richard Wagner arrives on the 7th April at Dresden, where his *Rienzi* has been accepted for performance.
First performance of *Rienzi* on the 20th October.
1843. First performance of *Der Fliegende Holländer* on January 2nd.
Wagner appointed royal *Kapellmeister* on February 1st.
1844. Removal of the mortal remains of Carl Maria von Weber from London to Dresden. Decisive action of Wagner.
1845. First performance of *Tannhäuser* on October 19th.

1846. First performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony under Wagner's bâton.
1847. First performance of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* with the new translation and arrangement by Wagner.
1848. Wagner's mother dies.
Political speech in the Dresden *Vaterlandsverein* on June 14th.
"The Nibelungen Myth as a sketch for a drama," 1848-49; first intimate relations with Franz Liszt in consequence of the performance of *Tannhäuser* in Weimar.
1849. Insurrection in Dresden of the 5th to the 9th of May.

Second Epoch

1

1849. On the entry of the Prussian troops into Dresden, Wagner goes to Liszt in Weimar, where he remains until May 25th. A warrant issued against him; he flees to Zurich, where, after a short visit to Paris, he settles permanently.
Die Kunst und die Revolution, published by O. Wigand in the Autumn.
1850. *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* appears at the beginning of the year; *Kunst und Klima* in April; *Das Judenthum in der Musik* in the Autumn.
Hans von Bülow conducts in Zurich under Wagner's direction.
First performance of *Lohengrin*, by Liszt, in Weimar, August 28th.
1851. *Ein Theater in Zurich, Brief über die Goethe Stiftung*, and other smaller works appear in the summer; *Oper und Drama* in September; *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde* at the end of December.
Commencement of the new *Nibelung* poem in the Autumn.
1852. Words of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.
1853. The poem "*Der Ring des Nibelungen; a stage-festival-play for three days, and an introductory evening*," published in January, 50 copies, as a confidential communication to friends.
Composition of the *Ring* begun in November.
1854. Wagner reads Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.
1855. Residence for four months in London to conduct the Philharmonic concerts.
1857. Interruption in the composition of the *Nibelungen Ring*. The poem of *Tristan und Isolde* written and the composition begun.
1858. Wagner leaves Zurich in August and travels to Venice.
1859. From March residence in Lucerne, where he completes *Tristan* at the beginning of August.

2

1859. Removal to Paris in September.
The poem to *Tristan und Isolde* published.
1860. Great Wagner concerts in Paris.
The score of *Tristan und Isolde* published.
1861. Three performances of *Tannhäuser* in the Grand Opéra in Paris on the 13th, 18th, and 24th of March.
On the 15th May Wagner hears his *Lohengrin* for the first time (in Vienna).

1862. Wagner leaves Paris in February, and after staying for several months in Bieberich, settles in Vienna. Meets Schnorr von Carolsfeld.
Poem of *Die Meistersinger* published.
1863. First public edition of the words of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.
Seventy-seven rehearsals for *Tristan* in the Vienna *Hofoper* without the work being performed.
Extensive concert tours to St Petersburg, Prague, Pesth, etc.
1864. Home in Vienna given up.
Call to Munich by King Ludwig II. The message reaches Wagner on May 4th.
Ueber Staat und Religion.
1865. Performance of *Tristan und Isolde:* general rehearsal on May 11th. First public performance June 10th.
Report on a school of music to be erected in Munich.
Schnorr von Carolsfeld dies on July 21st.
Wagner leaves Munich on December 10th.

3

1866. Wilhelmine Wagner, Wagner's first wife, dies on January 25th.
Wagner rents Hof Triebschen near Lucerne.
Composition of *Die Meistersinger*.
1867. Composition of *Die Meistersinger* completed in the Autumn.
1868. First performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* on June 21st, in Munich.
Deutsche Kunst und Deutsche Politik appears in June.
1869. First performance of *Rheingold* (without Wagner's co-operation and against his wish) in Munich.
Siegfried Wagner born on June 6th, of the marriage with Cosima Liszt.
Uber das Dirigieren, and the second edition of *Judenthum in der Musik*.
1870. *Beethoven* published in December, second edition within the month.
Siegfried Idyll composed.
First performance of *Die Walküre* in Munich (against Wagner's wish).
1871. Tours in search of a place for the festival plays.
Two visits to Bayreuth.
Uber die Bestimmung der Oper, a lecture delivered in the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin.
Richard Wagner's collected writings begin to be published by Fritzsch.
Foundation of the first Wagner societies.

4

1872. Foundation stone of the "Bühnenfestspielhaus" laid in Bayreuth on May 22nd.
Uber Schauspieler und Sänger and *Das Bühnenfestspielhaus zu Bayreuth* published in the Summer.
1873. The crane is placed upon the roof of the *Festspielhaus*. *Wahnfried* built.
1874. Delay in the building of the *Festspielhaus* owing to want of money.

1875. In the Summer a series of preliminary rehearsals for the festival plays held in the *Festspielhaus* whilst yet incomplete.

1876. The first Bayreuth "Bühnenfestspiele."
Three performances of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.
Rehearsals begin June 3rd; close of the festival plays August 30th.

1877. Wagner conducts large concerts in London in May to obtain money to cover the deficit of the festival plays.
The poem of *Parsifal* appears.

1878. The *Bayreuther Blätter* founded in January.
Numerous articles by Wagner, amongst others: *Was ist Deutsch? Modern, Publicum und Popularität.*

1879. *Wollen wir hoffen? Uber das Dichten und Componieren, Uber die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama, Uber die Vivisektion*, and other articles in the *Bayreuther Blätter*.

1880. Residence in Italy from January until the Autumn during convalescence after a serious illness.
Religion und Kunst appears in the October number of the *Bayreuther Blätter*.

1881. Additions to *Religion und Kunst* appear in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, November.
Journey to Palermo.

1882. Completion of *Parsifal* in Palermo on January 13th.
The second "Bühnenfestspiele" in Bayreuth. Sixteen performances of *Parsifal* from July 26th till August 29th.
Goes to Venice for the winter in September.

1883. On January 31st the last completed work: *Letter to Heinrich von Stein* as introduction to his *Helden und Welt*.
On the 11th of February commencement of the last addition to *Religion und Kunst*, *On Woman in human Life*.
Sudden death, February 13th.

Bronze Relief von E. Sayn-Wittgenstein, 1853

Second Chapter

Richard Wagner's Writings and his Teaching

"As of actions, so of books; unless we speak of them with affectionate sympathy, with a certain enthusiastic partiality, there remains so little of them that it is not worth mentioning."

GOETHE.

E. de Puny pinx. 1880 Photogravure Bruckmann

Verlag bei M. Alfred Bovet, Darmstadt

Introduction

Dem glücklichsten Genie wird's kaum einmal gelingen,
Sich durch Natur und durch Instinkt allein
Zum Ungemeinen aufzuschwingen:
Die Kunst bleibt Kunst! Wer sie nicht durchgedacht
Der darf sich keinen Künstler nennen.

GOETHE.

The artist as author.

It is almost always the sign of a check when an artist breaks off his work to appear before the world as a speculative writer. The check may or may not be evident, as such, to the outer world, according as it has an external cause, or proceeds from the conflict of opposing forces within the artist himself.

Almost every artist of genius has to protect himself against the outside world. Benvenuto Cellini used dagger and poison; the most natural weapon for us, who live in modern times, is the pen. Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Gluck, are well-known examples.

Everybody knows how vigorously and recklessly Goethe and Schiller defended themselves against the criticism of their time, which was just as narrow-minded and just as malicious as it frequently is now-a-days. Less generally known is the fact that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart meditated writing a book on musical criticism, with the object of punishing his opponents and obtaining undisputed recognition for himself (letter to his father of December

28th, 1782). It will always be a matter for regret that his intention was not carried out, for we know from his letters that he possessed an unusual amount of critical acumen; heedless of all consequences, his pen, with its caustic wit, chastised many things generally praised in his day, and even now regarded as commendable. Besides, such a book would have dissipated the ridiculous fiction of the mindless genius, singing like the bird on the tree. Christopher Wilibald Gluck was wiser than Mozart; he did not remain thinking about it, but repeatedly took up his pen to lay his views before the superficial judgment of the world, and to protest against the notion that people should think it possible to speak of his works "after imperfectly prepared, badly conducted and worse executed performances" (Dedicatory Preface to *Paris and Helene*), as well as to protect himself from "those over-wrought lovers of art, whose soul has its only seat in their ears," etc. And many more great artists have been moved to restrain their creative impulse for a time to overcome opposition and to enlighten ignorance.

With the checks which an artist receives from within, the case is very different.

When Leonardo da Vinci left his paintings unfinished upon the easel to take up the study of geometry and anatomy, Isabella D'Este thought, with many more of his friends and admirers, that a "new Apelles was lost for art." But Leonardo was not to be put off by remonstrances; to his lofty imagination there had appeared a different, a more perfect art-form than was known to his contemporaries. To realize the new ideal, the artist had first to forge his tools, and it was for this that he spent years on the construction of his anatomical tables; for this he studied mathematics and wrote his book on painting. Leonardo's mighty spirit discovered obstacles where others saw none; when they were overcome he produced his master-works, and when these were before the world men understood why Leonardo had written books! Then too they understood that *reflection*, for which he had been blamed by superficial minds, was the source from which the most perfect beauty issued at last, and that especially Leonardo's thoughts were destined to benefit, not only himself, but the art of all future ages.

Richard Wagner.

Richard Wagner had, all through his eventful life, to fight with hindrances of both kinds; this is why he wrote so much.

Wagner did what Mozart intended to do; by his critical appreciation of his predecessors and contemporaries he threw a flood of light[1] upon the history and development of music and of the drama. Like Gluck he had to fight against stupidity, against slander, and against the effects of "imperfectly prepared performances" of his works, against the "shallow heads, which," as Mozart sarcastically says, "are pained when they hear anything they cannot understand"; against "art connoisseurs and leaders of *bon ton*, a class of men

[1] "Criticism is nothing without genius. Only genius can estimate genius or instruct it."—Herder.

unfortunately very numerous, and which, to speak with Gluck, has "always been a thousand times more hindering to the progress of the arts than the merely ignorant." Wagner too was hindered by the menials of royal theatres, and by the jealousy of that class of composers who, as Beethoven says, "only know how to make musical skeletons."

But by far the greater number of Wagner's writings arose from motives akin to those which led Leonardo to write his *Trattato della Pittura*. Wagner too had a new artistic ideal before him, and of Wagner we may say that he had first to establish the "laws of perspective" of this new art, before his genius could move freely within it. But herewith the points of agreement between these two great artists are by no means exhausted. Leonardo's artistic imagination led him to study Astronomy, Geology and Philosophy, and the clear vision of the creative poet—related to the scientist as he was by nature—discovered truths which science took centuries to establish[1]; and so did Wagner carry his researches deeper and deeper into the word-tone-drama, drawing wider and wider circles round the fixed centre of art.

Schiller says: "through beauty men are led to *thought*," and with the certainty of his mild and yet consciously pre-eminent intellect he declares: "The man of æsthetic feeling will judge with catholicity and will act with catholicity as soon as he *wills* it" (*Aesth. Erz*, letter 23). This *will* is, as we saw in the first chapter of this book, one of Richard Wagner's most remarkable characteristics; his stormy, impulsive will, serving a mighty creative imagination, could never find satisfaction within the narrow bourns of scholastic art. Every really great man is a hero; a conqueror of the world slumbers within him. On hearing the news of the battle of Jena, Beethoven exclaimed, "I would yet vanquish Napoleon," and Wagner, when he set to work to remodel art, and arrived at the knowledge that "Art is not a thing apart from the world, arbitrarily to be determined by itself" (U., 179), felt within him power to remodel the entire life of human Society. If art so required it should be done.

It was quite natural, and shows the soundness of Wagner's intellectual capacities, that his meditations on dramatic art should lead him on to the subject of art in general. But to recognize this clearly, and to make it clear to others, he had to include man's entire social development in his view. Politics, Philosophy, Religion, everything must be considered. His artistic views would be anomalous if they were not part of an entire picture, a world-embracing philosophy. Wagner was a man in the ancient sense of *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto.* And he was an artist. "The artist," says Novalis, "stands upon the man, as the statue upon the pedestal." In this Wagner resembled Goethe and Schiller on the one hand, and on the other, perhaps still more closely, the great Italian artists of the Renaissance, Leonardo and Michael Angelo. That in which he most resembles these last is the way in which, without leaving his artistic ground, he directs his eye towards a distant object, sees it and judges of it; whilst Goethe,

[1] Amongst others the circulation of the blood and the movement of the earth!

as it were, divides himself up into different personalities, with the evil result that the artist sometimes misleads the scientific observer, while some of the finest strokes of Goethe's genius with respect to Nature are weakened in their absolute value by the sudden obtrusion of conceptual thought and systemization. The characteristic German element finds its expression in Wagner in so far that he—the musician, as contrasted with the painter—concentrates his attention upon human nature to the neglect of everything outside humanity. In this he shows his relationship especially to Schiller (and to Goethe), as will be seen still more distinctly in the sections on politics, regeneration, and art.

Let us now apply Schiller's words to Wagner; can we assert that this great artist really judged with catholicity? To decide this point would be to attach a weight to our own judgment which few would be inclined to concede to it. Whether Wagner was right or not is a subordinate question; the important point at first is to gain a view of the entire field of his thought, and then to realize the harmony between his thinking and the whole of the other part of his being. It must also not be forgotten that much of what Leonardo saw by intuition, and quite correctly, was laughed at in his time; the world shrugged its shoulders and passed on; the world was right, for it was not yet ripe for his science. Besides, it must be admitted that an artistic intuition can never at once become the common property of all. The mark of a rare individuality will be impressed upon everyone of its creations; its visions are always works of art; they reflect nature, but do not agree with it mathematically. Now and again, it even seems as if genius, at least temporarily, followed the steps of the madman, as if for a time it cast aside the fetters which bind it to earth, and as if its eye perceived a nature, beautiful and glorious indeed, but not of our world. The normal man can no more dispense with his fetters than a ship can throw away its ballast. In this, genius alone—or madness—can follow genius. The wise man stands reverentially aside. Nor can any one foretell when the recognition of any truth will pass from the possession of the few to that of the many.

Here, in this book, the question is not one of philosophy, but simply of Richard Wagner's personality, and when we wish to bring a great figure clearly before the view in sharp outline, the strife of opinions may well be put aside. Above all, we must bear in mind that Wagner's thoughts necessarily overstepped the limits of the schools. Herein Wagner acted like every other hero of art who has had to force a path of his own. But he never left the sure ground of art; he retained it as a centre, and so was able to preserve the unity both of his thought and of his whole being. How entirely Wagner always remained artist, how true it is that this circumstance determined the direction—though not the limit—of his thought, will be seen in the succeeding part of this chapter. For the present his own testimony at the period of his most feverish literary activity may suffice. "I am, in everything which I do and meditate, only an artist, solely and entirely an artist" (1849, L., i. 41).

The artist's "distress."

At present I wish above all things to point out that his true artistic nature showed itself externally in the fact that he only took his pen and became an author when compelled to do so. Every one of his writings, with the sole exception perhaps of his *Beethoven*, is a forcible reaction against some disturbing influence which presented itself to his incessant impulse to create. Here again we have Wagner's own admission: "Only under the most severe constraint did I compose my literary works" (R., 10). For this reason too we see Wagner's writings appear in some degree *spasmodically;* generally several follow one another in quick succession; they form a group separated from the preceding and following groups by long intervals, which were entirely employed in artistic creation. When a check occurs — whether from without or from within — Wagner's passionate energy brought about a thorough moral and intellectual *catharsis* before the "comfortable frame of mind" in which he "again has pleasure in music" (L., ii. 4) returned to him. But when absorbed in this "pleasure," the other "pleasure"—that of abstraction and argument—vanished; no prospect of advantage or any other consideration was able to tear the artist away from his creative work; he could scarcely collect his mind sufficiently to write letters.

One example will show what I mean: In the year 1849 Wagner suddenly put aside a number of splendid sketches, relinquished his plan of having an opera performed in Paris, and, without a thought for his own personal interests, began to write pamphlets. He feared that the art which could no longer grow upon the soil of the Anti-revolution "would at first prosper no better on the soil of Revolution, unless measures were taken in time" (L., i. 22). The clear conviction that this soil did not exist, and that it would be found neither in revolution nor in anti-revolution, and that the works of which he dreamed would remain a dead-letter, unless a complete change were wrought in our conception of dramatic art, of music and of the relation between art and life, was therefore the check which his joyful creative impulse experienced at this time, and which stifled his "pleasure in music." *To prepare the soil* in which his art could grow, Wagner then, in 1849, became an author. In the course of the next three years a goodly array of works, both large and small, came into being. However far Wagner may seem to wander in some of them from his main subject, he always steadfastly pursues one end: to prepare the soil for his art.[1] But directly this is done, directly he feels that he has satisfied his own requirements in this respect, Wagner returns to his art; nothing gives him pleasure except artistic creation (L., ii. 78), and he rejects every proposal to continue his work as an author. He did so this time. In 1853 some of Wagner's friends wished to found a new art review; they believed that they could reckon with certainty on his coöperation; during the last four years he had displayed an in-

[1] What I aimed at in such apparently remote regions as the state and religion, was in reality still exclusively my art—this art which I meant so seriously that I required a foundation for it, and sought it in life, in the state, and lastly in religion" (viii. 8).

exhaustible productivity in the field of literature. But when asked he replied: "*quand on agit on ne s'explique pas*—I am now only in the mood for action, not for explanation" (L., i. 269). After a struggle of years—internal and external—Wagner again found "pleasure in music." "*Rheingold* was flowing through his veins" (L., i. 283) when he refused to have to do with the Review. Soon afterwards he began the composition, and then he begged his only bosom friend, Franz Liszt, to excuse the shortness of his letters: "If I had a mistress I do not think I should write to her at all . . . what goes on within me cannot be written about; I cannot even speak it, so necessary is it to me only to feel, or to act" (L., i. 294). The period of authorship (1849-52) was ended; it had suddenly and violently broken in upon his artistic work; now the check was overcome, and—for the artist—entirely laid aside. Years passed before Wagner again felt the need to wage war with the weapons of logic and dialectics on behalf of his art—years which brought forth *Das Rheingold*, *die Walküre*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and a great part of *Siegfried* and *die Meistersinger*. This example is typical.

Similar circumstances had, before this, converted Wagner into an author, but also only for a time; similar circumstances often made him one again. We always find that his writing is a forcible reaction against some obstacle presenting itself in the way of his untiring impulse to create.

In its simplest form the obstacle is material want—want of bread (Paris, 1840). To earn money he wrote novels and articles on music. Later it was crying abuses in the theatre, which it would have been easy to remove by re-organisation; or it was the fact that the public failed to understand a work to which they were not accustomed, such as the Ninth Symphony, until it was brought nearer to them with the aid of mental concepts. Against these difficulties Wagner strove by means of programmes and plans for organising the theatre (Dresden, 1846-48). The first incentives to literary work are therefore external hindrances. Then comes the decisive conviction that for the great "general" art, the creation of which Wagner had recognised as the task of his life, the soil must be prepared (Zurich, 1849-52). Hence followed the necessity for Wagner in the first place "to speak out freely against the entire art of the time in its connection with the political and social conditions of the modern world" (iv. 407). But immediately upon the negative followed the affirmative; upon *Kunst und Revolution* (*Art and Revolution*), *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (*The Art-work of the Future*). And upon this affirmation in terms of general philosophy there followed the constructive work proper, *Oper und Drama*, in which Wagner built up the monumental edifice of the new drama, the word-tone-drama, from its foundations. After completing this, his principal treatise, together with its supplement (U., 141), *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde*, Wagner felt that the work was done: "I have now satisfied the impulse which had at last led me to become an author" (iv. 408). He writes confidently to his friend Uhlig: "I really think I have written enough; what more can I

say if my friends fail to see clearly now?" (U., 141). And to Roeckel he says soon afterwards: "It would now be impossible for me to write another word" (R., 19). Nevertheless he was destined to write some seventy more treatises! For if the Zurich writings owe their origin to his desire to prepare the soil for his art, matters were afterwards aggravated by the circumstance that these works themselves were misunderstood and misinterpreted by friend and foe alike. My whole being, and the very gist of my views, are still scarcely comprehended at all" (R., 19)—that was Wagner's admission to himself two years after the publication of *Oper und Drama*. And now he was prevented by his exile from revealing "the gist of his views" in the way of art—*i.e.* by performances to his contemporaries;[1] afterwards the command of a monarch proved powerless against the intrigues and ignorance which prevented his preparing the soil for a new art; later still the Bayreuth stage was built, but only in the face of enormous difficulties, and no sooner built than it stood unused for years, owing to the general want of interest in the matter; and so there always arose new obstacles, only to be combated by writing. To this was added another consideration.

As Wagner's star rose higher, and personal obstacles, or what a superficial view might regard as such, were overcome, there was less external necessity for him to take up the pen of controversy, but all the more did the inner motives come into operation. Ever deeper did Wagner feel the cleft between "the requirements of the German genius as they appear in the works and tendencies of our great masters" and "the public performances in the province of dramatic art," so that at last he felt, as he says himself, "an inward compulsion, persistently to press on the necessary reforms"; but it was an obstructing, painful compulsion, under which he declares that he had more to suffer than the world can realize (viii. 217). For Wagner the question was, as we have seen, not one of mere reform of dramatic art. Such reform is inconceivable until the *dignity* of art has been recognised and asserted. At first Wagner had defined art as "joy in oneself, in existence" (iii. 18); later he regarded it as "the highest common expression of human life" (iii. 255), but soon afterwards it had acquired a deeper significance for him, and he spoke of it directly as "the highest moment of human life." How he wishes this to be understood will be seen from what follows: art can only be the highest moment of life "when it is a thing not separate from this life, but in all the varieties of its expression fully contained therein" (v. 58). In the society of to-day art serves exclusively for entertainment, for diversion; at the best it is a worthy relaxation after the labours of the day. Our theatres, in particular, aim, as even Schiller laments, at nothing more than rocking a thick-headed bookworm or exhausted man of business into a magnetic sleep. But the same poet exclaims to artists:

[1] It is true that during his banishment Wagner's works were taken up by almost every German stage, but as he himself observes in 1856: "They continue in Germany to perform my operas *badly* with unfailing success."

"Der Menschheit Würde ist in eure Hand gegeben,
Bewahret sie!
Sie sinkt mit euch! Mit euch wird sie sich heben!"[1]

Wagner firmly believes this to be true. He believes in the power of art, and in its mission; he feels it in his own heart, and proclaims the joyful message to all. For this reason too he taught to the end of his life that for art in general, for its true position in the world, a new soil must be found (1881, x. 47).

But observe well that it is his vocation as an artist which urges him to this. Again and again in the course of his life Wagner takes up his pen to write about art and its high purpose, its "holy magic," and it is always a *strict sense of duty* which drives him forcibly thereto. He himself says: "Nothing can be more foreign or more painful to the artist's nature than such a process of thinking, entirely opposed as it is to that which he is accustomed to" (vii. 152). "It fills me with bitterness to be obliged to write about my art" (i. p. vii). Only in the realm of poetry does he himself find pleasure: "Only creation can make my life endurable." But he obeys the inner impulse and writes.

When for instance the general *political* revolution seemed at hand, and Wagner for the first time gave up his own personal plans "to prepare the soil for art," he was not by any means exclusively considering the interests of his own works; he felt "that to him a not unimportant task had fallen" (R., 3). . . . "Though it was far from my purpose to indicate the new *political* order which was to arise on the ruins of a lying world, I felt enthusiasm in constructing the art-work which should arise from the ruins of a lying art. To hold up this art-work before life itself, as the prophetic mirror of its future, seemed to me an all-important means of damming the sea of revolution within the bed of the placid stream of humanity" (iii. 3). The honour of mankind rests in the hands of the artist. Later, when this political movement had come to a miserable end, and the *Meister* in his long banishment had found leisure for *philosophic* meditation, he recognized the high philosophic mission of art, inasmuch as it "resolved reality into a soothing dream" (*Staat und Religion*, viii. 37). But even then too, when he breathed the "world-resolving" atmosphere of philosophic contemplation, Wagner descried in art the positive, affirming power, qualified to restore to mankind "the unspeakable vision of holiest revelation." With more and more certainity he now recognised the dignity of art as founded in its kinship with *religion;* religion alone lends real creative power to art; art alone, by its ideal representation of the symbols of religion, brings forth the divine truth concealed within them (*Religion und Kunst*, x. 275, *et seq.*).

Arrangement of the Chapter.

The division, therefore, of this chapter on Wagner's *Writings and Teaching* into the headings—*Politics*, *Philosophy*, *Regeneration* (which last can only spring from the deep soil of a true religion), is not only convenient and synoptical, but

[1] "The dignity of man reposes in your hands,
Oh keep it well!
It sinks with you, with you 'twill rise again."

it corresponds to the real chronological order, and brings Wagner's literary work in its grand outlines before the view. Not that politics disappeared from his horizon after the philosophical method of thought had entered decisively upon his life; not that in the course of time a religious standpoint superseded the philosophic, for in the *Meister's* very last writings we find important observations both on politics and on philosophy, and similarly the true idea of regeneration lies at the bottom of his earliest works. It would be nearer the truth to say that things which at a certain time of his life, and not unfrequently in consequence of external fortuitous circumstances, appear in the foreground, and attract special attention to themselves, at a later period recede more and more from the view, whilst things merely hinted at before become important. We must be careful not to lay too much stress upon the convenient division into periods, or suppose it to denote a necessary organic evolution. The remarks which I made in the introduction to my first chapter are here entirely applicable. The fourth section, that on his *Art teaching*, embraces equally all writings and all periods of Wagner's life, for with Wagner art is as the sun; from it all light is radiated; round it every star revolves. In a short appendix I will then give a general catalogue of Wagner's writings.

The characteristic mark of Wagner's thought is its astounding unity, a unity of things far removed in time, and a gathering together of the heterogeneous under a single point of view. In general, too, this is perhaps the most prominent quality of artistic thought founded on observation and intuition. Of any dialectic process (in the sense of Hegel), every conception evolving necessarily into its opposite, the two then combining to a new synthetical conception, and so on, there is here no trace; it is all organic growth—growth by "intussusception" in which the new elements do not destroy the old ones, but penetrate and expand them. In this way does the oak grow from a seed-germ to the "Monarch of the forest"; in this way grew Wagner's thought.

I

Richard Wagner's Politics

> "With this makeshift state, which has arisen directly out of the natural destiny of man, and is adapted exclusively thereto, man *as a moral person* neither could nor can rest content; woe to him if he could!"
>
> SCHILLER

Richard Wagner in 1849.

UNDER the head of Wagner's teaching it is perhaps allowable to comprehend not alone his writings, but also his life. I consider it therefore advisable, in this endeavour to trace his relations to politics, first to return to the events of the revolutionary years 1848-1849, which have been so much spoken about. I have already said a good deal about this episode in Wagner's life in my first chapter, but a perfectly clear view of its significance is so indispensable that I shall, I hope, be excused for recurring to the subject once more. This will teach us at the same time what we have and what we have not to expect from Wagner in politics, and will so lead us to the only suitable method of examining his political ideas.

Kneeling on the shore of the Rhine, as he returned home after the years of misery in Paris, he vowed "eternal fidelity" to his mother-country. To this vow he remained true until his death; it led him in May 1849 into actions, the

KÖNIG LUDWIG II

Nach einer Photographie im Hause Wahnfried, Bayreuth

rashness of which he frankly admitted in later life (L., i. 121). Some of them in fact he characterized as "tomfooleries" (*dumme Streiche*), (Letter to Fischer of October 29, 1857). But when we reflect that these *dumme Streiche* arose from a burning love for his German fatherland, we shall see little reason to regard them as unimportant; least of all shall we be inclined to sneer at them as passing vagaries, as others have done. Here, if anywhere, Goethe's words are appropriate:

"Dümmer ist nichts zu ertragen,
Als wenn Dumme sagen den Weisen:
Dass sie sich in grossen Tagen
Sollten bescheidentlich erweisen."[1]

In reality we can learn so much about the tendency of Wagner's mind, and about his character, from his conduct in 1848-49; his actions at that time stand in such immediate relation to what went before, and had such a decisive influence upon his entire subsequent life, that this short period is one of the most important of his whole career.

What Wagner wanted first of all, the object to which he devoted his life, was a single, strong Germany, in contradistinction to the impotent confederation broken up into individual fragments (v. the letter to Prof. Wigard of May 19, 1848). He could not, however, as a born Saxon, at once (did he ever?) regard the hegemony of Prussia as the true solution of the problem, and his conduct, first in protesting against such a thing,[2] and then, when the Prussians marched into his Saxon Fatherland, throwing himself onto the side of armed opposition, was politically not prudent, but it was noble. With true patriotism one sphere lies concentrically round the other; the centre, the *punctum vitale*, is the love to one's own family, without which all so-called patriotism is but shabby self-interest, on the footing of a Joint Stock Company. Wagner's wish to have the greater Germany, and at the same time not to see the lesser Germany, the home of his childhood, betrayed, is one which an unbiassed future will admire, not blame.

Herewith the strictly political part of his creed at that time is indicated in its broad outlines. Details regarding his political and social views will be given in the second half of this section, and in the third section of this chapter.

That Wagner defended his opinions in public speaks for his *moral* courage. Besides this, the "tomfooleries" of 1849 supply us with many excellent proofs of his masculine intrepidity, his *physical* courage. Wagner did not indeed join in the fighting—that is certain; but it is stated that he had night charge of supplies brought up from the country, a post which exposed his life to serious danger. And another fact, resting upon better authority, exhibits a boldness only conceivable at all as a combination of genius with extraordinary

[1] "Nothing is more insufferable than when fools pretend to teach wise men that it is their duty to remain quiet in a corner whilst momentous events are taking place."

[2] *Cf.* the proposal to admit no single state with more than six million inhabitants.

courage. The printer, R. Roempler relates how, when the expected advance of Prussian troops upon Dresden became known, he had to print, on Wagner's order, some hundred strips of paper with the words: "*Are you with us against foreign troops?*" in large letters. Feeling some curiosity as to what the *Hofkapellmeister* was going to do with them, Herr Roempler followed him when he left the premises. To Roempler's astonishment Wagner climbed over the barricades and distributed the strips among the soldiers besieging Dresden! After he had given them to the troops in the *Schlossplatz*, he went to those encamped on the *Brühl'sche Terrasse*, and disappeared from Herr Roempler's sight. "That for such proceedings he was not at once taken prisoner, and perhaps even shot dead, is a perfect miracle, for at that time a man's life was held very cheap," adds the witness of this bold and reckless deed.[1] When we consider this simple occurrence, and then read the accounts of the temper of officers and men at that time, how prisoners were battered to death in their chains with the butt ends of muskets if they spoke a single word, it must be admittted to be almost miraculous. It can only be explained by the magic charm of his great personality. However this may be, this one story, unimportant as it is in itself, proves the man who has so often been reproached with inglorious flight to have been a true hero, *sans peur et sans reproche*, a hero who, in the consciousness that he was serving a good cause, ventured unarmed, in broad daylight, into the ranks of his enemies.

One more quality—perhaps the most excellent of all human virtues—we may claim for Wagner after the experiences of those days: the impulse to side at once with the weak against the strong. "Only to the vanquished, not to the victorious hero does our sympathy belong" (x. 317), Wagner wrote thirty years later. Certainly, from the *political* standpoint, a questionable tendency, which has misled many a generous soul to "tomfooleries," but a tendency which of itself suffices to win for Wagner the sympathy of all warm hearts.

But the most important thing remains yet to be mentioned. Besides his political views, and these qualities of his character, Wagner's conduct at that time exhibits the leading feature of his entire being, to which I have often drawn attention in the sketch of his life, and to which I shall always have to return: that is his confidence in the German genius. Through all the disappointments of a seventy years' life Wagner preserved this faith. And so too we see him now in 1848-49 appeal "to the King's Majesty" in reliance upon the German genius, and in the name of his people,—to Freiherr von Lüttichau, to intimate to him "the terrible forebodings which oppress his soul" regarding the future of the people,—to the *Kultusminister*, Martin Oberländer, with his Scheme for the erection of a German National Theatre,—to the members of the

[1] From Püttmann's *Australian Calendar* for the year 1890—reprinted in Fritzsch's *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* of June 28th, 1894. Roempler emigrated to Melbourne, after the revolution, and died there in 1892.

Vaterlandsverein, who were strangers to him, "to restrain them by intellect and gentleness of purpose from coarse excesses,"—to the members of the Frankfort National Assembly because "patriotic anxiety" led him to apprehend "much misfortune" (Letter to Prof. Wigard),—to the Saxon soldiery, whom he might have expected to shoot him dead. Wagner afterwards wrote to Uhlig of this time: "To us the attainment of good seemed only to depend upon our *willing* it." Such confidence may perhaps be described as "naïve," but in naïvete of this kind there is an element of greatness. Here again I cannot resist the temptation to quote the great and wise Goethe: "For the man of action the first concern is that he should do right; whether his right purpose be achieved, should be of no account to him."

In this desire to do right, in this faith of Wagner, there is not only greatness but, mark well, there is truth. Which proved to be right, the "revolutionist" Wagner, or his inexorable persecutor, Graf Beust? It is worth while to consider this question a little more closely, for here the "practical politician" is opposed to the "unpractical dreamer."

Wagner and Beust.

One month after those days in May 1849 Wagner complained to Franz Liszt about the aspersions, the object of which was to "represent me to the eyes of blockheads as far more deeply involved in the insurrection than I was in reality" (Letter to Liszt of June 19th, 1849).[1] This made his position much more difficult; nevertheless he thinks: "To offer a general explanation in public could only bring disgrace upon me, it would appear like excusing myself, and I can only be excused—in the true sense—by time and by my life, not by a public explanation in the present precarious state of affairs, and in my necessitous circumstances it would appear mean and cowardly." Proud manly words! "I can only be excused by time and my life," that is all. The real significance of Wagner's share in the movement of 1848-49 could not, and cannot to this day, be brought to light by a minute microscopic enquiry into a thousand details, the evidence for which is moreover very contradictory; only time and Wagner's life can give us any information about it. His life lies in its entirety before our eyes; truly Wagner can say in the words of Hans Sachs, "the witness, I think, was chosen well." And time in its eternal march has in this short space "excused" so much of what Wagner did and said, it has justified him in so many ways, that we must begin to observe some caution with our airy talk about "pardonable errors of a great artist," and the rest of the usual platitudes.

That Wagner possessed little capacity for politics in the narrower sense of the word is undeniable. Herein lies the original insuperable antagonism between the artist and the political intellect. Wagner very soon saw this himself; immediately after the events of May he writes: "every sensible person

[1] It is noteworthy that precisely the same endeavours are in vogue amongst the very same "dregs of Dresden baseness" (to use Wagner's expression) to this day, after the lapse of nearly half a century. May "the eyes of blockheads" find their delight therein!

must see for himself that especially now, after my experience in the revolt, it would be impossible for me ever again to mix myself up in a political movement" (L., i. 27). Henceforward he thought "politics quite fruitless" (x. 336). "A political man is detestable," he writes to Liszt in January 1852 (L., i. 164). In the very year of the revolution, 1849, he says: "I am, in everything which I do and think, merely artist, simply and entirely artist; am I then to throw myself into modern public life? As artist I am unable to approach it; and to enter it as a politician—may God preserve me from that!" (L., i. 41). I do not mean to say by this that he possessed no political vision in a wider sense, that instinct of the man whose heart beats in harmony with the heart of a whole people, and with the vivacity of a sanguine and creative temperament. Perhaps a comparison will help to clear our views on this point; which of the two has been "excused by time and life," the statesman Beust, or the artist Wagner?

Graf Beust was an eminent statesman, and nobody is likely to deny that he served the various monarchs under whom he had the honour to be placed, faithfully, conscientiously, and to the best of his ability. But I ask: who was justified by time and by his life? the man who never lost his faith in the German genius, the man who despised the *gloire* of Paris because he knew himself to be "the most German of all German artists"; the man who in exile worked on for Germany's undying glory, who, when—involuntarily—he came once more into a certain contact with politics (in Munich), had only Germany's true greatness before his eyes, and preferred to hazard his entire future rather than betray the holy cause of his people; the author of the poem *An das deutsche Heer vor Paris* and of *Heil Kaiser Wilhelm;* the man who applauded the "tremendous courage" of the mighty German statesman Bismarck (ix. 381); the man whose unswerving faith in the German genius was justified by the German people in the deeds of its army, and who then, and not till then, erected his temple to German art? Or that other man who allowed many of the best sons of Germany to languish for years in prison, men who later, in the Government service, or elsewhere, gave evidence of their great abilities; the man who banished German art from Germany, who suffered that it should be protected by Napoleon, and encouraged and protected foreign art in Germany; the man who desperately opposed Germany's development into a mighty, world-commanding State, who passed from one defeat to another; who, when the holy Empire of the German nation rose again, like the Phœnix from its own ashes, retired in rancorous hate to the distant province which had fallen away from Germany, and had become the prey of Slavs and Magyars, and who, in his impotent thirst for revenge, attempted, by spreading calumnies from this renegade's nest, to sully the memory of those great Germans who had trusted the genius of their people.[1] Which of these two, I ask, was excused by his life? which has been justified by time?

[1] *Cf.* p. 57.

To ask this question is to answer it. And this one example suffices to show that, although not claiming Wagner as a politician, we certainly should not be justified in refusing to allow him any political insight.

Poet and politician.

Wagner cannot be called a politician, because he did not recognize the ways and means to attain a near political end, as indicated by the special circumstances; this is the task of the politician. Wagner credited others with too much; when he took up politics he found himself—according to his own admission—under a great error regarding the *world* (ii. 2); his poetic imagination created men, such as are rarely found; he created them in his own image. The first and most indispensable qualification of the politician is, however, the power of judging soberly of existing relations; the right estimation of men according to their—usually very small—capacities. Schopenhauer is therefore quite right when he calls it ridiculous to speak of *genius* in a politician, even though he be a figure in the history of the world. Pope even says that excess of intelligence is a disadvantage to a statesman; to achieve great things the statesman only needs certain eminent qualities of character. It must not be expected from a genius that he should possess talent for politics, in the narrower and strict sense of the word—*i.e.* the special wisdom of the statesman; that would be preposterous. What Wagner did possess was the quality for which Goethe coined an expressive word: the gift of "understanding the will of *folkdom*" ("*den Willen der Volkheit zu vernehmen*"). Wagner expressed the same thing—though with quite a different purpose—when he said "the poet is the one who knows things of which we are unconscious"; for the whole of folkdom, together with its executive organ, the statesman, moves unconsciously towards its ends. The empirical philosopher, Herbert Spencer, discovered to his astonishment that at every age the laws of the State have generally produced the opposite of what they intended, and always something quite unforeseen, and he recommends in politics "philosophic calm and philanthropic energy"; the poet Richard Wagner regarded the action of statesmen as "violent but always fruitless" (x. 326). In reality it is not the laws that err, but only their authors, who are however just as necessary as tilling is for the fields, if the will of the people is ever to become a reality. The poet then is the only knower of this thing of which we are unconscious. If his heart beat in harmony with that of his people, as was the case with Wagner, he will see what no other person sees; he is the prophet who descries the future (v. 94).

We see then that even though we describe the genius of Richard Wagner as decidedly *unpolitical;* even though such a man almost of necessity committed *dumme streiche* directly he descended from his own high level to the trivialities of every-day life, that which he felt and taught may and must nevertheless be of very great interest to the politician. In such a genius it is the will of folkdom, "A will which the masses never speak" (Goethe), that finds expression in words.

We have therefore every reason to pay respectful attention to Wagner's

pronunciations regarding the politics of his fatherland and about the mechanism of human society.

Plastic contradictions.

From all this it will be clear that Wagner's political views can only be appreciated when they are considered from a higher standpoint than that of daily politics. In the very year of the revolution he writes to Liszt: "I really have other things in my mind than the stupid political questions of the day" (L., i. 38); and in his essay *Ueber Staat und Religion*, written in 1864, he says: "Certainly it was characteristic of my enquiry that I never descended into the region of politics proper, especially the politics of the time, which, notwithstanding the acuteness of the situations, never really touched me or was touched by me" (viii. 8). It is natural that under these conditions Wagner's very first political declaration, his speech in the *Vaterlandsverein*, was misunderstood by all, by king and by people, by democrats and monarchists alike. No better did it fare with his later utterances. He was not understood, and could not be understood. But to-day it rests with us whether we wish to understand him or not. What follows here must be regarded simply as a guide to help us to understand his views.

What are Wagner's leading political ideas?

Before I can answer this question I must draw the reader's attention to one important circumstance which will help us to understand everything which follows.

Wagner's teaching—not only in politics but in everything else—contains theses which at first appear like direct contradictions. This fact has already perplexed many; how is it to be explained?

In the whole of nature logic has its place only in the human brain. The feelings of mankind at large, however, do not always conform to the logical laws of thought in the individual. Man is an integral part of nature, and his actions (when we regard them in their grand features) take place in accordance with much wider laws than those which lie within the narrow bounds of the cerebral functions. For this reason the will of mankind is fraught with contradictions; it is as we say "unreasonable," but it might just as well be called in conformity with nature. "*Folkdom*" wishes to have (as Goethe observes) at once "Classicism and Romanticism; freedom of trade and control by guilds; consolidation and division of the soil," and I may add: order and freedom; leisure and work, etc. State organisation, however, can only proceed by exact logic, that is, it must be one-sided. Herein lies the truth of Pope's remark, that a statesman must be a little deficient in intellectual capacity. That is true in the sense that a statesman, however acute he may be, must of necessity keep only one thing before his eyes, to the neglect of the wider effects even of his own actions. The complete justification of this one-sidedness, without which nothing can be attained by the logical process laid down for mankind, was seen very clearly by

Wagner; he writes: "To be a politician means, as my present experience goes, to keep only what is immediately possible in view, because in this way alone is success attainable, and, without success, political endeavours are mere nonsense" (Letter to Roeckel of March 6th, 1862). But the genius of the poet seeks something much deeper than that which is immediately possible; it grasps the necessary, the common need, from which spring the real requirements of the people, who "themselves can only be satisfied in community" (*cf. das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 60 and 188). Genius finds expression for what is illogical, contradictory, but true, the subsoil from which all human feelings and actions spring. And just because it does this, because it is entirely unpolitical; because genius does not feel as the single individual, not even as the single class or party, but as the entire "folkdom"; because it is, so to speak, a microcosm, or at least a *microdemos*; because it gives language to that which folkdom feels, without being able to express it, it follows that the opinions and utterances of creative genius must always and without exception contain unexplained contradictions. Wagner by no means stands alone. Perhaps the grandest example of contradiction within unity is Goethe, but all great artists are the same.[1] Only the practical, industrial Cyclops views the world through a single eye; the people and the genius have two.

We shall therefore find striking, I might say *plastic* contradictions everywhere in Wagner, and especially in his fundamental ideas on politics.[2]

When we have realised that the poet is not the slave of logic, but the priest of truth, and that as such he enjoys the privilege of expressing with lofty impartiality the contradictions which spring from nature herself, and of applying them according to a higher justice, then, and not till then, can we derive profit from a closer consideration of his teaching, to which we shall now pass in this and the following sections.

His patriotism.

The first point which must be brought forward with respect to Wagner's politics is its pronounced *German* character.

At first it is true that Wagner shared the notions about the brotherhood of nations which were in vogue—especially with the enemies of Christianity—at the time of the revolution; this was nothing else than the heritage of Christianity, which itself was being attacked in many quarters. It is scarcely surprising that the fiery artist did not pause to enter upon any deep enquiry into the question of races, when the wisest men of his time had declared with

[1] And not only artists but all really great men. In no one are more drastic contradictions to be found than in Martin Luther.

[2] But to suppose (as many authors have done) that such a mind could suggest contradictory nonsensical propositions through want of intelligence, or of proper consideration, is much more naïve than are (according to the same authors) any of the boldest dreams of the great poet.

Humboldt that there were no such things as noble or ignoble races. He afterwards learned to look more deeply, and found that an undeniable difference in capacity existed between the various races; in spite of scientific dogmatism, he recognised the Indo-Germanic race as qualitatively the highest, but still his heart embraced the entire range of humanity; his dream of the glory of his German fatherland was, in later years also, not that it should rule the world, but that it should ennoble and redeem the world (x. 173); surely these facts do not justify us in attributing to him radical cosmopolitan tendencies!

Here already he is swayed by two apparently contradictory sentiments: Wagner was a German in the exclusive and intensely patriotic sense of the word; at the same time his interests were universal, and embraced all men in the true spirit of Christianity.

But that upon which the greatest stress must be laid is the fact that Wagner never, even during the time of the revolution, joined the standard of "Internationalism." In his work *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* he does indeed distinguish "two principal elements of the development of mankind, the *racial-national* and the *unnational-universal*" (iii. 75). But he acknowledges the value of the racial-national with "joyful transport." The reproach which Wagner makes against our modern States in the same essay is the very fact that to a great extent they do not rest upon a racial-national foundation, but are the most unnatural combinations of men, the outcome of arbitrary external processes, especially dynastic family interests (iii. 199). And though he was misled by his authorities into the false position that the racial-national development had now reached its final completion, it must be remembered that at that time (1849) this question did not engage his attention, that on the contrary he scarcely touched it theoretically, and that above all in practice his acts and his feelings were racial-national! That is decisive.

In his famous speech in the democratic *Vaterlandsverein* on June 14th, 1848, Wagner (the unpractical dreamer!) requires the establishment of German colonies, and expresses himself almost chauvinistically: "We will do it better than the Spaniards, to whom the new world was a priestly slaughter-house, differently to the Englishman, for whom it was a tradesman's till. We will do it in German fashion and nobly."[1] In the very same speech Wagner expresses his disapproval of the demand of the men of forty-eight for a "constitutional monarchy on the broadest democratic basis," because this conception of monarchy is "a foreign un-German notion." In the face of such words no one can doubt Wagner's downright "racial-national" German feeling, even at a time when he imagined himself a believer in unnational development in the future. Further proofs however are not wanting.

Lohengrin—"for the German land the German sword"—was composed in 1847; the patriotic Article "*Die Wibelungen*" in 1848-49; the *Design for a*

[1] The colonial idea occupied Wagner throughout his life. *Cf.* for instance *Religion und Kunst* (x. 311).

German national Theatre in 1848, and revised in 1850. In the same year, 1850, in August, only ten months therefore after the completion of the work in which he had spoken of an *un-national-universal* development, Wagner wrote his *Judenthum in der Musik* (Judaism in music). The question of race already claimed his whole attention; he was no longer instinctively, but consciously a German, and he opened war against all that was un-German amongst his own people and in their art. He remained steadfastly faithful to the deep truth which he had discerned; for this he fought and suffered, as I shall explain more in detail in the third section of this chapter. Henceforward he fought manfully for Germanism, not only against the encroachments of the Jews, but also against foreign influences, in general against everything un-German. By this he at first brought upon himself the hatred of all other nations, but now, when Germanism, as embodied in its art, has triumphed in every country, he enjoys throughout the whole world the glory of having been among the first who defended and represented the peculiar qualities of the German. This is however so generally acknowledged that I need not emphasize it by special examples, but will pass on to matters which are less known.

Wagner's fundamental political convictions.

In order to bring the views of this German man with respect to the State and Society drastically and vividly before the reader, I will at once name the two fundamental contradictions which govern his political thought from beginning to end; the rest then follows of itself, and single details which appear to contradict each other will be no longer perplexing, but quite natural; it will be seen that they are not weak inconsistencies, but the consequence of the organic unity of his views of the world.

1. *Monarchy* was always considered by Wagner the indispensable centre of all social organisation; *bonâ fide* monarchy, *i.e.* the rule of one man, need not be confounded with the "absolute monarchy" of legal theory; for Wagner, whilst clinging to monarchy, was never tired of contending for the freedom of the individual. The first contradiction is therefore: *Monarchy*—a free people.[1]

2. *Religion* with Wagner is for the inner life what kingship is for the outer. Even in those years (say from 1849-52) when Wagner's attitude was directly hostile to traditional Christianity, there is not a single work by him in which he does not speak of religion as the foundation of "true human dignity"—as the source of all art etc.: The *churches*, on the other hand, and the crystallization of revelation into dogma, although they are generally treated with the greatest respect by Wagner, and often give occasion to luminous excursions, are manifestly far removed from his personality, so that one may read his entire works without discovering to what Christian "sect" he belonged; neither his doctrines nor his works would justify any one in particular in claiming him as its own. The second contradiction therefore which is always present with him, though

[1] We shall see as we go on that this formula may be reversed; free sovereign—absolute people. Only in this double form does the full sense appear.

only a few times categorically expressed, is the *antagonism between religion and church*.

In the first contradiction we have the union of two theses regarding which the sober understanding cannot at first comprehend how they can exist together at once: in the second, *per contra*, two theses, generally supposed to be mutually inter-dependent, are opposed to each other.

His attitude to religion.

As this section is concerned only with politics in the restricted sense, I can adduce very little regarding religion, and will dispose of this at once, that I may then pass on to my principal subject. The further discussion of religion belongs to the section on regeneration. But I am obliged here already to lay stress upon Wagner's decided attitude towards this question, and to place it in its proper light, because of its fundamental importance for the conformation of human society. Most instructive are his utterances during the revolutionary time.

When Wagner in his speech in the *Vaterlandsverein*, the only political speech which he ever held, advocated a very trenchant remodelling of our social institutions, and particularly demanded the abolition of the nobility, he obtained the reputation of being a "blood-red." On what did he rest his hopes for the future? On Parliaments? On the rights of mankind, or anything of the sort? No, on God! "God will give us light to find the right law!" The defiant faith of these words is worthy of Luther. And in the same speech he goes on to declare his object to be "the fulfilment of the pure doctrine of Christ," and speaks of the "divine import" of the king's mission. Only ignorance or malice could doubt his deeply religious temperament. Regarding the meaning of religion Wagner's views never altered. In his writings in Zurich, in Munich, in Bayreuth, we always find him on the same standpoint: that art and religion in some sense condition each other, that neither can prosper without the other, and that the development of mankind to a better and more beautiful future is dependent upon the well-being of both.

But on the other hand the contradictions to which I before drew attention, and which might perhaps more correctly be described as: love for religion—antipathy to priests—makes Wagner's frequent attacks upon the church, and especially the fact that no kind of hypocrisy was so hateful to him as religious hypocrisy, quite intelligible. He says very aptly: "With religion the German takes it very seriously" (*Was ist deutsch?* x. 63). Wagner very soon realized and admitted that in some of his earlier writings[1] he had expressed himself unjustly, and in a narrow-minded way about Christianity, owing to his having had solely and exclusively the *misuse* of divine revelation for worldly purposes before his mind (viii. 28). As in the race question, he had trusted at first too much to the guidance of men who led him away from his own safe path: Christianity and sacerdotalism seemed to him at that time synonymous

[1] In *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, *Kunst und Klima*, all three belonging to the years 1849-50.

(E., 40). But the fact that twenty years later he included these writings, as they were, in his collected works, proves that he did not regard this opinion as an error, but only as a one-sided view, a cloud, attributable to a hasty judgment (E., 90), which a consideration of the entire work of his life would at once place in its true light. In fact Wagner's *Kunst und Revolution* may be regarded as a treatise against hypocrisy, which is lashed in all its different phases, hypocrisy in the State, in poetry, in the drama, in the church, in patriotism, in "honour" etc. In Wagner's heart at that time arose the revolt which Carlyle speaks of as necessary, the abhorrence of lying rulers and lying teachers. To many who then came into personal contact with Wagner "he appeared like a messenger of wrath, sent to denounce the sin of hypocrisy" (U., 173). And truly a man who had felt religion less deeply than he, who had felt less firmly convinced that "only religion leads to true human dignity" (viii. 26), would never have let himself be carried away into calling the church "a manifest liar and hypocrite" (iii. 22). Was he not speaking truth when he wrote: "for the benefit of the rich, God has become industry . . . our God is money, our religion money-getting" (iii. 32-34)? And does he not in the same place cry out for another, a *true* religion, which shall not be the religion of money, the ruling religion of egoism (iii. 33, 77, 145, etc.)? Does he not say: "the work of art is the living representation of religion" (iii. 77)? Was it not he who in 1848 wrote *Jesus of Nazareth*, a glorification of the divine person of the Saviour?[1] And are not the closing words of "*Die Kunst und die Revolution*," the invocation of "Jesus who suffered for mankind, and Apollo who raised them to their joyful dignity," a literal prophetic message of the grand thoughts which Wagner unfolded thirty years later in his celebrated essay: *Religion und Kunst* (Jesus and Apollo)?

On the other hand it must not be overlooked that later, when Wagner spoke with the most perfect justice of Christianity in its historical aspect, into the truest, deepest spirit of which he had been initiated by Schopenhauer, he never tired of denouncing "the progeny of lies"; only a few days before his death he held up the church as "a terrible warning example" (Letter of Jan. 31, 1883, x. 416). In what sense this is to be understood will appear from another letter written in 1880: "We throw over, without hesitation, church, priestcraft and the entire historical phenomenon of Christianity, in order to have that Christ whom we wish to preserve in his full purity" (*cf. Wagner Lexicon*, p. 941).

It is therefore certain that at every period of his life Wagner taught belief in God and religion as the indispensable foundation of social life. In fact, a view which he expressed at the time of the revolution will scarcely be intelligible unless we allow ourselves—at least in imagination—to be carried away by the high mounting waves of this period of storm and stress. Wagner was then inclined to regard the State as a mere substitute, only to be justified by the

[1] *Cf.* chap. iii., sect. 2, and the Abbé Hébert's book: *Le Sentiment religieux dans l'œuvre de Richard Wagner* (Paris, 1895).

defects of our religion; the ideal before his mind was *one* religion and *no* State (1851; iv. 91). And though he soon abandoned such extreme opinions, the formula came straight from his heart. He could not help seeing the impossibility of carrying it out in practice—but who knows? Perhaps it would have expressed what he felt until his death better than any other.

The monarchy.

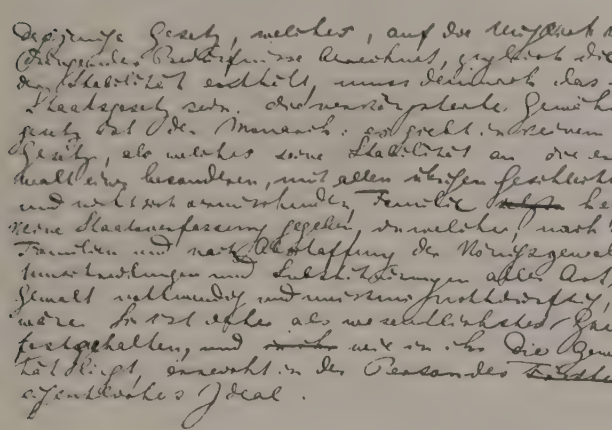
"Absolute king—free people"—that is what I regard as Wagner's political creed in its most concise form. Till the five-and-thirtieth year of his life he never troubled himself with political questions; but directly they engaged his attention he proposed these two theses, and until the end of his life they formed the nucleus of his views on the State.

One thing above all others I must draw attention to; of course these two conceptions, absolute Kingship—free people, did not in Wagner's mind contradict one another; on the contrary, he regards them as correlatives. The people are free, only when there is *one* ruler—not when there are many. The King is sole ruler, only when he has no rivals to satisfy in the nobility, or parliamentary majorities to consider, and reigns over a free, "absolute" people. Whether Wagner was right in his views or not it is no business of mine to enquire. One thing appears to me indisputable; what he here expresses is "the dumb will of folkdom," more particularly it is that of the whole Teutonic race. In the ancient Indian law-books we read: "the wise had both worlds in their minds when they made the prince, the exceeding great being; for they thought, he will be the embodiment of the law." Free men under a single ruler; it is thus we meet the various branches of the Germans at the time of the migration of nations. The dream of Charlemagne may have been the same, only magnified into grand dimensions, and to the present day the coalescence of royal faith and steadfast love of freedom is the special characteristic of all true Germans, and in it the special conformation of the several Teutonic States has originated. It is easy to smile at such thoughts; never has anything great been accomplished in history without ideals, and Wagner followed a happy inspiration when in 1848 "he held up to the very prosaically guided masses a *poetic* picture of his conception of Kingship."[1]

In the speech to the *Vaterlandsverein* Wagner utters a warning against Constitutional Monarchy—"that foreign, un-German notion. Every forward step on this democratic basis is a new encroachment upon the power of the sovereign, the sole ruler; the principle itself is a complete satire upon monarchy, which can only be conceived in its real nature as the government of one; every advance in constitutionalism is a humiliation for the ruler—a vote of want of confidence against the monarch. . . . A lie cannot continue, and monarchy, that is the Government of one, is a lie; it has become one by constitutionalism." . . . The object of this whole speech, held in the middle of that stormy time, when the very foundations of order seemed to tremble, was to prove that "the principle of Kingship could always remain the holy centre." Such were Wagner's views

[1] See the letter to Lüttichau, given in facsimile above, p. 55, and the translation in Appendix II.

regarding Kingship at his most revolutionary time. Later, in 1864, he gave the completest expression to his thoughts on this subject in his essay, *Uber Staat und Religion* ("On State and Religion"). The most important passage will be found here in facsimile. Especially the last sentence, "the State attains its true ideal



Ueber Staat und Religion. Wagner's Collected Works (viii. 14).[1]

in the person of the King," expresses Wagner's view pithily and forcibly. The word "Kingship" (*Königthum*, first introduced into the German language by Wieland) savours somewhat of abstraction and systemization; the holy centre of the State is not King*ship* as Wagner wrote in 1848, but the King's person. This person of the king Wagner glorified especially in *Lohengrin* and in his (unfinished) historical drama *Friedrich der Rotbart*, both from the time of the revolution.

About Wagner's views on Kingship therefore not the slightest doubt can exist. Less easy to explain is his conception of the *free people*. Perhaps we can do so best by endeavouring to define his relation to the different parties of modern political life. Of himself, and those who think with him, Wagner says: "We belong to none of all those (political) parties" (x. 350). It is important to understand the sense in which he belonged to no party; for this relation was not the negative result of a mere withdrawal from politics; it was the outcome of a positive conviction. The free people.

[1] "That law which makes it possible to relieve the most pressing necessities, and which at the same time contains the best security for stability, must therefore be the most perfect law of the State. The guarantee of this fundamental law is embodied in the monarch. There is no more important law in any State than that which provides for stability by making the highest power hereditary, and vesting it in a particular family, not mixing or allying itself with others. There has never yet been a constitution in which, when the kingly power has been abolished and the family has perished, it has not been found necessary to re-establish some similar power, under elaborate precautions and limitations, and usually with very poor success. The kingly power has therefore generally been retained as the guarantee of stability, and in the person of the King the State attains its true ideal."

Was Wagner, for instance, a conservative? It is true he declares in his so-called revolutionary essay, *Kunst und Revolution*, that art, at the time of its prosperity, was always conservative, and would become so again (iii. 35, v. 43),[1] later he declares, in his own peculiar way of regarding not what *should* be but what *is*, as the main thing: the German *is* conservative (x. 63). But to set Wagner down as a conservative would be rather too bold a paradox; in the common political sense of the word he never was one. Antipathy to nobility follows almost necessarily from the proposition: free king, free people. The nobility, when it has no political part to perform, is neither one thing nor the other, and soon learns to prey upon the middle classes; caring only for its own selfish class interests, it trenches equally upon the rights of the king and the rights of the people. In his *Vaterlandsverein* speech Wagner therefore requires "the destruction of the last remnants of aristocracy," as an indispensable condition of the emancipation of the monarchy. The past services of the nobility to art he indeed acknowledges (iv. 280), and subsequently, in 1865, he issues an appeal to the German nobility in his essay *Deutsche Kunst und Deutsche Politik*, but even then he designates it as, in its present form, "almost superfluous, even mischievous," and demands such sacrifices if it is ever again to become worthy of the old orders of chivalry, and represent "a power of intellect and character" in Germany (viii. 145), that he himself afterwards smiled at the *mal à propos* suggestion (x. 162).

His attitude to the nobility brought upon him the reputation of being a liberal, and this is scarcely surprising. But he never deserved such a reputation, for as early as 1850 he spoke of all our liberalism as "a not very clear-sighted intellectual game" (v. 86), and everything he says in his later works about the reign of liberalism reminds one of Goethe's words, "an idea *must* not be liberal!"

The assertion that Wagner was, at least for a time, a true democrat, has more appearance of truth, but only the appearance. In his *Vaterlandsverein* speech he speaks of democracy: the "rule of the people" is there indicated as the object to be aimed at. But as the whole speech is devoted to the retention of the hereditary monarchy, whilst at the same time violently attacking constitutionalism, the democratic element in it is very problematical. So too it appeared to the members of the *Verein*, for the *Dresdener Morgenblatt für Unterhaltung und Belehrung* of June 18th, 1848, declares that his speech had brought Wagner "into rather strained relations with all opinions and parties." A true democrat Wagner can never have been, simply because, as he says himself, democracy is quite un-German. "Democracy is an imported product in Germany. It exists only in the press" (x. 69).

Was Wagner then a *Socialist?* It has been asserted that he was one, at least temporarily, at the time of the revolution. But the fable of a socialist-Wagner is dissipated by the *Meister's* own words. In his speech to the

[1] *Cf.*, too, the interesting commentary (U., 137).

Vaterlandsverein in 1848 he speaks of communism as "a most insipid and senseless doctrine," and to the members of the *Verein* who were infected with Socialism he exclaims, "Will you not see that this doctrine of the mathematically equal division of property and earnings is but an unthinking attempt at the solution of a problem which is indeed felt, but the solution of which is impossible, and therefore still-born." More clearly than this it is surely impossible to speak! In 1849 Wagner says, "men are led astray by the theories of socialist doctrinaires." In *Oper und Drama* (1851) he says, "the Socialist torments himself with fruitless systems" (iv. 282). In short, we may say positively that as a *political party* the Socialists never possessed his sympathy. How should the artist ever feel enthusiasm for a process of converting the people into Philistines, after the ideal of a Lassalle and a Marx?

On the other hand it is certain that he never felt the alarm at the mere mention of the word Socialism which is felt by many good people, for whom "peace and order, even at the price of the most infamous crimes against human nature" (iv. 77) is the highest thing in the world. Especially towards the end of his life Wagner often mentions Socialism (*e.g.* ix. 144, x. 270 and 309); the Socialist movement appears to him, "for cogent inner reasons, well worthy of respect," and before this he had often spoken of "the deep, generous, natural impulse" which lies beneath the movement (iii. 40). His attitude to Socialism is sufficiently indicated by these weighty words: "Every political revolution has become impossible. In politics there is no one whose eyes remain to be opened; everyone knows the infamy of our political conditions. What gives these cowards courage to hold out is the fact that behind them lies the social question. We have now no movement to expect except the social one, but in quite a different sense to that dreamed of by our Socialists."[1] Now, fifty years after these words were written, all the world is beginning to see that a decided Socialist movement must, and in fact does take place, but "in quite a different sense to that dreamed of by our Socialists."

Let us try to bring Wagner's views with reference to the Socialist movement quite clearly before us.

Wagner as revolutionist.

"My business is to make revolution wherever I come!" (U., 20). These words may be taken as Wagner's motto for his whole life. And if any one chooses to call him a *revolutionist*, nothing need be said against it—provided it be observed that, even in his storm and stress period, Wagner never believed in a political revolution, and can therefore under no circumstances be called a *political* revolutionist. Wagner only believed in the possibility of a thorough and successful *reform* for a very short time, perhaps only for a few weeks in 1848. In the summer of 1849 he wrote *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, and in September 1850 he announced to Uhlig his present "mistrust of all reforms, and belief only in Revolution" (U., 58).

If we admit the term "revolutionist" as in some degree applicable to

[1] From an unprinted letter of 1850.

Wagner, though not in its present accepted sense very accurate, the reader must well understand that his share in the political movements of the forties has absolutely nothing to do with it. At that time Wagner was, according to his own admission, "involved in error and carried away by passion" (L., ii. 122); the events of those days have therefore great value for the knowledge of his character (his intrepidity, his confidence in the German nature etc.), but none for the estimation of his socialistic views. Those are to be found expressed very clearly, and in full detail, in his writings from 1849 down to 1883. And it is in the light of these writings as a whole that we feel it impossible absolutely to reject the term *revolutionist* as applied to Wagner.

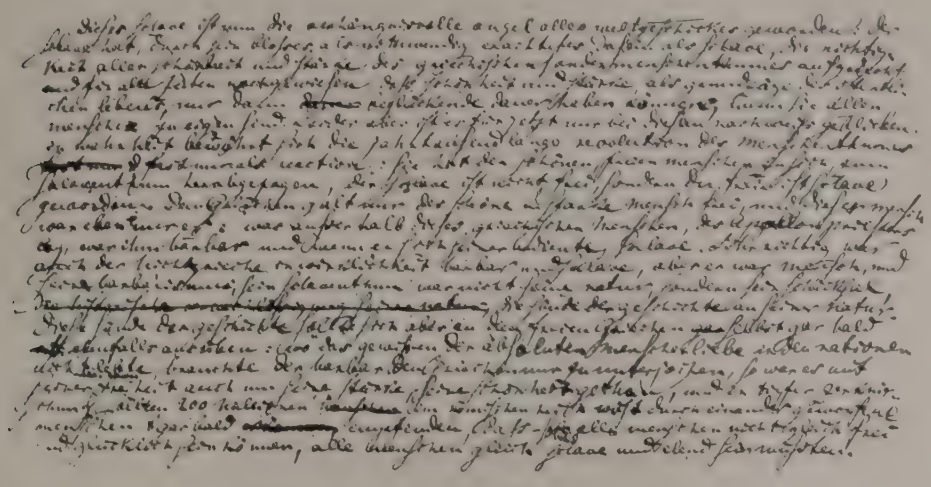
But what does Wagner understand by *revolution*, if not a political revolution? He understands it to mean, "the great revolution of mankind, the beginnings of which anciently subverted the Greek tragedy," which "displayed its first effects . . . in the dissolution of the Athenian State" (iii. 36-38). For more than two thousand years, ever since the victory of "the revolutionary statesman" Pericles, Europe has been living in the chaotic state of revolution. The real State, the State of our dreams, has "always been in decadence, or more properly, it has never attained real being" (iv. 81), and our so-called civilization is a chaos (ix. 144). Our entire political activity, whether its form be reactionary, liberal, democratic, or socialist, is in truth *revolutionary*. Revolution comes from *revolutio*, and means *turning;* the different parties resemble the spokes of one and the same wheel, which will continue to turn as long as there are slaves to drive it and slave-owners to keep them at work. His essay *Die Kunst und die Revolution* contains in forty short pages a masterly sketch of this revolutionary movement in which (according to Wagner) men are still involved. It is not possible to select quotations from a work so concise; we hope the time is not far distant when every German will value the works of Richard Wagner just as highly as those of his other intellectual heroes. Then he will understand the peculiar sense in which Wagner was a revolutionist.

Schiller and Wagner.

Wagner stands on exactly the same ground as Schiller. For Schiller too the State of the present day is a make-shift; for Schiller "the spirit of the time oscillates between perversity and coarseness, between unnaturalness and pure Nature"; Schiller too expects from the future a different order, one which can not be expected from the State of the present day, "for the State, as now constituted, has caused the evil,"[1] etc., etc. Wagner's "revolution of mankind" is therefore the same as Schiller's succession of different kinds of make-shift States; he regards humanity as now in a chaotic intermediate stage, dating from the moment when doctrinaire politics began, and the goal of his longing is what Schiller calls "the substitution of the State of Freedom for the make-shift State," namely, the end of the revolution. What here distinguishes Wagner from Schiller is, not the standpoint, but solely the mode of exposition. In his letters on the æsthetic education of man Schiller begins with an appeal to Kant;

[1] *Cf. Briefe über die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen.*

Wagner appeals to Greek art; in Schiller's dissertation the philosopher is predominant, in Wagner's the artist; Schiller's has, therefore, the character of unimpassioned grandeur, Wagner's that of glowing passion. What Schiller says contains perhaps more incontestable truth, but for that it is more abstract, less easy to grasp; Wagner is recklessly one-sided, but more penetrating. As an example of this penetrating quality of Wagner's writing we give here in facsimile one of the most brilliant passages in *Die Kunst und die Revolution*.



Facsimile. (R. W., Collected Works, vol. iii., p. 33).[1]

This dissertation on slavery reaches a climax in the sentence: "directly all men cease to be equally free and happy all will be equally slaves and miserable." The equal distribution of property is rejected by Wagner, as we have seen; here

[1] "This slave now became the fateful hinge on which the whole history of the world revolved. His existence was regarded as necessary, and therewith the slave proved the vanity and uncertainty of all the beauty and strength of Greek exclusive humanity; he has proved for all time that beauty and strength, as fundamental features of public life, can only have enduring value when they are possessed by all alike. With the proof in the abstract however it unfortunately remained; the thousands of years of human revolution which followed were almost entirely of the nature of a reaction; the free and beautiful man was dragged down to slavery. It is not the slave who has become free, but the free man who has become slave. The Greek counted only the strong and beautiful man as free, and this was himself alone; whatever was not this Greek man, this priest of Apollo, was for him barbarian, and, when the Greek made use of him, slave. It was quite right: the non-Greek was barbarian and slave; but he was human; barbarism and slavery were not his nature but his fortune; they were the sin of history against his nature, in the same way as at the present day it is the sin of society and of civilization that the healthiest people, living in the healthiest climate, have become miserable cripples. It was not long before history sinned against the Greek himself. Wherever the conscience was not awakened in absolute love of mankind the strength and the beauty of the Greek were lost, along with his freedom, the moment he was subjugated by the barbarian. Two hundred millions of men thrown promiscuously together, and crushed under the yoke of Rome, soon learned that directly *all* men cease to be equally free and happy, all will be equally slaves and miserable."

we learn what equality he requires in its place! If we place ourselves on the standpoint of our "revolutionizing" make-shift State, and regard this as valid for all time, and worthy of preservation, then Wagner will appear as a revolutionist; but if we feel with Schiller that our State appears "eternally strange to its citizens, because the feelings nowhere come into relation with it," and that the destination of man is not to neglect himself for some extraneous object; or if one hold the view of Chateaubriand: "Le salariat est la dernière forme de l'esclavage," then Wagner will seem like a true anti-revolutionist (here again the plastic contradiction!). He longs to pass from darkness into light, from chaos into order, from the "barbarous constitutions" (as Schiller calls them) into the clear, fresh water of Nature (*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 62).

Many will think this is the dream of a poet; great historians and men of practice have, however, favoured similar views. Carlyle exclaims, "Millennium of anarchies; abridge it, spend your hearts'-blood upon abridging it," and he defines our society as "anarchy plus the policeman," and P. J. Proudhon, one of the most acute minds of the century, on whom by some inconceivable paradox the dreaded title of anarchist has been bestowed, after his having demonstrated the complete anarchy of the *present* order of things, and recognized in our constitutions, "the legalization of chaos"; Proudhon, too, understands by a revolution, not the building-up of a new order by violent means, but "the end of anarchy."[1]

Our anarchic order.

At the present day one scarcely dares to pronounce the word anarchist; for us it is about synonymous with bomb-thrower, incendiary, and murderer. But taking the word in the paradoxical sense in which it was understood fifty years ago, I find many points of contact between the Wagner-Schiller mode of thought and the anarchism of Proudhon. Wagner is rather fond of the word "anarchy." He says, for instance, in 1852: "How shall a man who is method to the back-bone comprehend my natural anarchy"? (U., 188). In another place he says: "I thought it better to make for chaos than to hold to existing conditions" (ii. 311); and in his account of *Parsifal*, written in November 1882, he declares the excellence of the performance to have been the consequence of "Anarchy, inasmuch as everybody did what he liked, namely, what was right." The last remark, it is true, is meant half in jest; bitter earnest, however, is the passage at the close of the same article, when Wagner, almost in the words of Proudhon, speaks of the world of the present day as "a world of murder and robbery, organized and legalized by lying, deceit, and hypocrisy" (x. 395). Especially characteristic is the emphasis laid upon negation. Proudhon says: "La négation est la condition préalable de l'affirmation." Wagner had written before this: "Nothing has been more ruinous to the happiness of men than this insane zeal for ordering the life of the future by laws planned in the present" (iii. 203); and in another place: "The people only need to know what they do *not* want, and this they learn by their unconscious life-instincts; the excessive

[1] *Cf.* especially *Idée générale de la Révolution*, pp. 122 and 298.

need will make this not-wished-for into the not-existing, will annihilate what is worthy of annihilation, and the *something* of the unriddled future will come of itself."[1] To the value of this negative as a principle I shall have to return in detail in the section on Regeneration. Here I will only observe that it is also hinted at by Schiller, when he speaks of "cowardice of the heart" as the principal reason "why we are still all barbarians." And we must bear in mind too that this faculty of negation, this "boldness" which Schiller requires, was, with Wagner, no passing fancy, but one of his most prominent characteristics all through his life. In his first utterances on the state of Society, in the *Vaterlandsverein*, he requires "the abolition of the pale metal," and with this bold negative demand he comprises all the misery of our anarchic order of things in a single word. "Our God is money, our religion money-getting"—this God and this religion Wagner negatives. Thirty years later the same thought appears, but deeper (as it had already presented itself, even at this earlier time, to his unconscious artistic instinct in his *Ring des Nibelungen*); it is now no longer the innocent symbol of exchange; it represents the curse of loveless existence (x. 332). To the same category belongs Wagner's negative attitude towards "the conception of property, simple as it appears in itself."[2] Not for any political end, be it well observed, but "for the sake of the *art* which we desire, it is indispensable that we should be under no delusion regarding the shocking form which our inner and our outer social life has assumed" (x. 163). With Wagner the faculty of negation went hand in hand with a rare faculty of affirmation, and formed a part of it; it is this fact which makes his character appear so mighty.[3]

The significance of this *rapport* with anarchism will now be evident. It only exists in his negative attitude. The present world is acknowledged to be bad, and this confession forms a fundamental article of his social creed. Any further relation between Wagner and anarchy there neither is, nor ever was, nor ever could be. The political anarchist does not build on God; his watchword is not "the fulfilment of the pure doctrine of Christ"; he does not regard Kingship as "the holy centre" of the State; nor does he teach Regeneration as a first condition of future happiness . . . above all: the anarchist breaks the threads

[1] This thought is expressed with great beauty in a very early fragment: "We only need to know what we do not want, and we shall spontaneously, of necessity, and quite certainly attain what we do want, of which we are not fully and clearly conscious until we have attained it; for our condition when we have removed what we do not want, is just that which we wish to arrive at. It is thus that the people act, and therefore they act in the only right way. You consider them incompetent because they do not know want they want. But what do you know? Can you conceive or imagine anything else than what really exists, what therefore has already been attained? You can imagine it, form an artificial picture, but not know it. Only what the people have achieved can you know; till then be satisfied with clearly recognizing what you do not want, with abjuring what is to be abjured, annihilating what is to be annihilated" (E., 19-20).

[2] *Cf.* in this connection the section on *Regeneration*.

[3] Feuerbach remarks profoundly, "Only he who has courage to be *absolutely negative* has the strength to create what is new."

of history, and with this impudent deed he sins against all Nature. Wagner, on the other hand, though he may sometimes exercise his privilege as a poet, and leave the present, with all its possibilities, far behind him, abides by the historical development of the human race as by his *alma mater;* here his certain instinct, his grand mode of thinking shows itself, and has earned for him the confidence and the respect of thoughtful men, even of those who are not able to follow him in every particular. "The future is not conceivable otherwise than as conditioned by the past," Wagner wrote in 1851. And to show what such a declaration really means, compare what the philosopher Auguste Comte alleged as his object in 1848: "réorganiser la societé sans Dieu ni roi"[1] with the "confidence in God and the King" which Wagner endeavoured in the same year to instil into a democratic society! The one is history, the other none; the one wisdom, the other folly.

Concluding remarks.

It is a fact very generally overlooked that the German poetical "seer"—a Schiller, a Richard Wagner—holds a place much nearer to the practical ruler of people than does the doctrinaire reformer of the stamp of a J. J. Rousseau or an A. Comte.[2] These, by their excessive attention to strict logic, and their anxiety to deduce everything mathematically, show how far removed they are from Nature. The politician only cares for reality; the same is true of the poet, but with this difference, that his reality is of a higher order. The really great-minded politician, and the poet of real genius, are therefore to a certain extent the complements of each other; the opposite of both is the theoretician, the doctrinaire. We do wrong in studying Lassalle, John Stuart Mill, Aug. Comte, and Marx, and simply shrugging our shoulders at the political views of a Richard Wagner and passing them over as "the dreams of a visionary." It is just because the poet sees something, that what he says deserves full attention. Idle and dangerous are only the waking, sober dreams of people who see nothing, who reckon by algebra how the world *ought* to be in order that it may square with reason.

I hope the reader has understood why Wagner cannot be regarded as belonging to any particular political party, and that he will not fall into the error of which the *Meister* complains at the beginning of the fifties: that he was denounced to the democrats as a disguised aristocrat, to the Jews as a persecutor, to the princes as a revolutionist (*cf.* U., 162). The same game continues to the present day; misunderstanding still dogs Wagner's steps; a just, worthy, and lofty apprehension of the man must not be expected until his writings and teachings have passed beyond the small circle of narrow-hearted critics and *literati*, and have become part of the intellectual property of the best and

[1] *Discours sur l'ensemble de Positivisme.*

[2] The great Rousseau is always in the right as long as he remains by the only possible work which is his, that of negation, and of demonstrating our modern State to be "un ordre apparent, destructif en effet de tout ordre, et qui ne fait qu'ajouter la sanction de l'authorité publique à l'oppression du faible et à l'iniquité du fort"; in his constructive work he of course fell into absurdities.

noblest. Then too it will come to be generally understood that Wagner's politics are but the preparatory school for his doctrine of Regeneration.

We have seen that Wagner—like every rational man—acknowledged the validity and necessity of politics. But he realized that its sphere of influence was very restricted, and that in particular it possessed no creative force. He refused to believe that politics would ever be able to master the social movement, either by *laissez-faire* or by suppression. His prophetic eye distinctly recognized that movement, at a time when the Metternichs and Bachs and Beusts saw nothing but tranquillity and order around them, or were at the most temporarily disturbed by wicked men, whom they shot or threw into prison. Wagner saw in it the end of the great revolution of mankind, that is, the end of the make-shift States, and therewith the end of all politics. That pleases his artist's heart, for he holds that "art in its real truth is not possible until there is no more politics" (U., 285, letter to Fischer). Never allowing his specific German object to pass out of sight, Wagner thought to see in this expected "end of politics" a favourable opportunity for the development and preservation of Germanism; for he says: "It seems that we Germans will never be great politicians; but perhaps we may be something much greater, if we judge our capabilities rightly . . . something through which we may be destined to become, not indeed the rulers, but the ennoblers of the world" (x. 173). And when he himself turned his back finally upon politics, recognizing that its sphere of action was limited to the present, then his relations to politics became perfectly clear.

"Where the statesman despairs and the politician is helpless, where the Socialist torments himself with impracticable systems, and even the philosopher can only interpret, never foretell, because the phenomena before us can only display themselves in an unconventional form, not to be brought evidently before the senses, the clear eye of the artist will discern the forms by which his desire for what alone is true, his desire for humanity, will be fulfilled" (1851, *Oper und Drama*, iv. 282).

2

Richard Wagner's Philosophy

"A very small number now remains of those who worthily are conversant in philosophy, who happen either to be detained somehow in banishment, and whose generous and well-cultivated disposition persists in the study of philosophy, being removed from everything which tends to corrupt it."

PLATO, *Rep.*

Introductory.

WAGNER'S public capacity as an artist had led him into contact with political questions, but the attempt to enter the field of practice had ended disastrously, and he had to live for many years afterwards in exile. This compulsory separation from the world on which he had hoped to exert a personal influence for good, and to the advantage of art, provided him with leisure and inducement to meditate deeply on the enigma of human life. Despairing for the present, Wagner turned to the past and to the future. In the past he thought himself able clearly to discern an epoch when art had been the highest moment of human life; days yet to come held out to the longing artist "the redeeming life of the future" (iv. 283). This withdrawal from the sensible present denoted the entry upon a world of thought. The man who had hitherto followed exclusively practical ends, and had only attended to things

immediately given, now lays out a bold philosophy of history (*Kunst und Revolution*). To the "cognition by dates" there soon comes the "cognition by principles," to speak with Kant. His unerring insight shows him that, though all futurity is conditioned by the past, no inference can be drawn from the past to the future, and he is compelled to base his enquiry into the future upon *philosophical* speculations on Nature and mankind, on science and on art (*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*). The broad contours of this future of his dreams were however unable to satisfy the creative artist, who moreover had in the last-named work in some sense to annul himself; there follows a philosophy of the perfect drama (*Oper und Drama*), from which every artist can draw inexhaustible instruction, and in which again the deepest thoughts about State and Religion, about natural history and language, about the past, the present, and the future of the human race are produced in overwhelming abundance as the outcome of Wagner's special method of artistic enquiry. In later years followed speculations "on State and Religion" and related themes, "on Actors and Singers" and other subjects belonging to dramatic art, and especially on the grand problem of the Regeneration of the human race.

If, therefore, we agree with Kant in regarding philosophy not only as a scholastic discipline, but more especially as an extension of our interests to all the practical concerns of this world, if we hold his view that "the practical philosopher, the teacher of Wisdom by doctrine and example, is the real philosopher,"[1] then we must view all Richard Wagner's writings from the very earliest as philosophical writings. Wagner never wrote on the æsthetics of art; only once does he seem to touch upon this subject, namely, in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, in the course of his speculations upon the different single arts, and it has given rise to many misunderstandings; æsthetics is a school-philosophy; what Wagner offers is world-wisdom. Metaphysics in the strict sense he only wrote once, in *Beethoven*—metaphysics of music; it was with special reference to Schopenhauer.

Obviously the philosophic views of such a man have a special interest. Nevertheless they have not as yet received nearly the attention which they deserve. The novelty of his standpoint has probably more than anything else prevented people from understanding his writings and his whole philosophy, and still continues to do so. Wagner regards the entire range of human life from the standpoint of the poet. Art is for him a sure standard of measurement; it is the heart-pulse of society. At first he merely seeks for enlightenment on art, but as he opens out the different phases of public art the entire history of mankind discloses itself to his view.

"Compression (*Verdichtung*) is the peculiar function of the poetic (*dichtende*) intellect," says Wagner (iv. 100). He compresses the vague, scattered multitudes of events to plastic pictures in glowing colours. Whether he is speaking of Greek and Roman civilization, or of the middle ages and the Renaissance,

[1] Kant, Logic, iii.

or of Myth, Saga, legend, romance and journalism, of Shakespeare, Corneille and Goethe, of history, language and religion, Wagner always gives in a few sentences, sometimes in a single sentence, the quintessence of the subject—not, however, in an abstract concept; it is compressed to a picture and easily apprehended. This is the method of the poet; but probably no one ever employed it so drastically before except Goethe, and the elliptic course of thought is not always easy to follow. The justification of the ellipsis is the picture, and it is just the picture that many overlook, because we are so accustomed to deal with abstractions. What perplexes most is the fact that Wagner's writings do not fit into any known category. The artist finds them too philosophical, the philosopher too artistic; the historian does not realize that the cognitions of a great poet are "compressed facts"; he despises them as dreams; the educated æsthetic dreamer beats a timid retreat before the energetic will of the revolutionist, who desires anything but "l'art pour les artistes," and wishes to remodel the whole world with the help of art. In short, these writings deserve in some respects Nietzsche's title "*For all and no one.*" With time they will become the common property of all, just because they aim far beyond the moment—even those which owe their origin to some momentary, perhaps long forgotten cause—*e.g. Ein Theater in Zürich* and others. They are philosophical works, they contain the philosophical views of a great intellect.

It is not my purpose to expound these philosophical views within the few pages of a single chapter; a worthy treatment of the subject would far exceed the limits of a book like the present one. But anyone who reads this whole book attentively, and carefully weighs Wagner's teaching with regard to Regeneration and Art, to be treated of in the following sections, as well as the section on the Bayreuth idea, will certainly obtain a clear perception of the outlines of Wagner's philosophy. In this section I shall confine myself to a very narrow field. Without entering into the "school-conception" of philosophy, which would lead to nothing at all—for Wagner never had anything to do with "school-philosophy"—I shall merely endeavour to trace, as shortly as possible, the main lines of Wagner's philosophical *development.* My only object is to obtain clearness. Kant never tires of declaring that only he who thinks for himself "is a true philosopher," and this contains *implicite* the assertion that only he who thinks for himself can follow the thoughts of a true philosopher. But the attempt, which has been made, to force the philosophy of a Richard Wagner into the narrow framework of this or the other sect, is a crime against the free self. Necessary it is however to clear away the clouds which in this case undoubtedly obscure the subject.

Poet and philosopher.

Wagner says: "It is the mark of the poet to be riper in the inner perception of things than in conscious abstract knowledge" (viii. 10), and in another place he regrets, in his Zurich writings, "the hastiness and unclearness in the use of philosophical schemata" (iii. 4). With these two remarks the difficulties which I mean are exactly indicated.

With the poet the formation of concepts does not keep pace with observation. All such distinctions are of course only relative; every great thinker is a poet; an abstract cognition, that is a cognition in words, will never correspond in every respect to his observation of phenomena, or be even distantly adequate thereto. It is a question of degree, and as the artist is by temperament more disposed to observation and less to abstraction than other thinkers, manifestly the disparity is more disturbing with him. This disparity itself therefore would be a source of misunderstanding, to which I would herewith draw the reader's attention.

Wagner admits too that there is in some of his most important writings an unclearness in the use of philosophical schemata; the author himself calls it *confusion*. Not only therefore were the words inadequate to their task, but the artist, owing to his hasty use of the first schema which presented itself to him, that of Feuerbach, sometimes, even in important passages, employed words in a wrong sense; his words were, as the Frenchman says, traitors to his thoughts. He himself laid much less weight on the use of any particular *terminus technicus* than his readers; for him the only object was to communicate a clear thought to others; they however were apt to grasp only the technicality. The Zurich writings therefore contain a second, very prolific source of misunderstanding, and I do not think that it ever quite disappeared, any more than the first one. Wagner once said, "I can only speak in art" (R., 69). In 1856 he imagined that Schopenhauer had "provided him with concepts entirely agreeing with his observations," but he presumably very soon found out that the agreement was by no means exact. The use of Feuerbach's schema had caused great "confusion," that of Schopenhauer too occasionally led him astray.

Our most important business will therefore now be to trace Wagner's relation to Feuerbach and Schopenhauer in its essential features. Without this we shall never understand Wagner's philosophical views. The task is the simpler, because no others have to be considered except these two. We have already observed that Wagner never busied himself with school-philosophy; even such names as Kant and Hegel very rarely occur with him, and then only in a way that does not indicate any close acquaintance with their works. But the manner in which he came to draw his concepts, first from Feuerbach and later from Schopenhauer, is very characteristic, and itself throws light upon his own philosophy.

Wagner and Feuerbach.

Of Hegel's philosophy Wagner says that "it succeeded in making the minds of the Germans so completely incapable of even apprehending the problem of philosophy, that ever since it has been considered the only true philosophy to have no philosophy at all" (viii. 60). These words perhaps express a personal experience.

It is evident that a world-embracing mind like Wagner's was certain to

feel the "metaphysical need," and all the more so that the need, as Schopenhauer very truly remarks, "becomes most apparent when the teaching of faith has lost its authority." The artist could never feel at home in Kant's pure reason; on almost every page of Hegel he met with thoughts positively repulsive to him. What, for instance, could the artist think of such words as these: "the more educated the man, the less he requires direct observation." How could he agree with a philosopher who says: "in the State the mind is developed to a beautiful body," and whose doctrine of art is that "in it the passions cease." And so the wistful artist turned in his despair, like so many others, to the philosopher who expressly "placed the essence of philosophy in the negation of philosophy" (Feuerbach, Complete Works, vii. 11).

At the present day, when Feuerbach's name has almost entirely passed away, and his writings appear to us almost as tedious and irritating as the speeches in the Frankfort Parliament, a great effort of the imagination is needed to realize the fame which this anti-philosopher enjoyed at the time of the German Revolutions. Feuerbach owed his excessive notoriety to quite a complex of circumstances. Some believed in him because he belonged to the school of Hegel; others because he threw this very school overboard; the free-thinkers applauded him as a destroyer of religion; pious spirits thought —with himself—that his doctrine betrayed the theologian, that it was "the real philosophy of religion," that it "imparted a religious meaning to life as such" (*loc. cit.*), that "philosophy must as philosophy become religion."[1] The Büchners, Moleschotts and Vogts hailed him as the philosopher of materialism, while budding Schopenhauerites, such as J. Frauenstädt,[2] felt drawn to the man who had written: "backwards I entirely agree with the materialists, but not forwards."[3] One thing could not but attract men of all parties to Feuerbach: his spotless character. He was at once a model of learning, a model of modesty, a model of fearless love of truth. His writings have perhaps been somewhat too severely censured by Schopenhauer as "verbose chatter"; be this as it may, his works and his life both testify to an ideal, disinterested striving.

To this honest philosopher—(truly a *rara avis*)—Wagner now turned. What particularly prepossessed him in favour of Feuerbach was that, finding philosophy to be nothing more than disguised theology, Feuerbach gave it up, supplying its place with a conception of humanity in which Wagner thought he recognised his own "artistic man" (iii. 4). This he wrote in the seventies, and it is not intended merely to justify retrospectively his former position, for on November 21, 1849, *i.e.*, the very month in which he finished *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, Wagner wrote to his youthful friend, Karl Ritter: "Feuerbach's philosophy ends by merging into human nature; therein lies his importance, especially as opposed to absolute philosophy in which human nature is merged

[1] *Nachlass*, published by Karl Grün, i. 409.
[2] Letter of February 2nd (Karl Grün), i. 300.
[3] *Nachgelassene Aphorismen* (Grün), ii. 308.

in the philosopher."[1] It was not, therefore, the *philosopher* Feuerbach to whom Wagner confided himself, but the *opponent* of abstract (or, as Wagner calls it, absolute) philosophy, the philosopher whose endeavour was to blend his thought with human nature. Wagner's relation to Feuerbach is therefore especially a moral one, and lies in the sympathy which he feels with the tendency of Feuerbach's mind towards the purely human.

This alone will throw some light on the remarkable fact that Wagner's writings of the Zurich period only present a few general points of contact with Feuerbach, and these not strictly of a philosophical nature. Another fact, which has hitherto escaped notice, may be mentioned, namely, that when Wagner wrote these treatises, and used the schemata of Feuerbach, he knew very little of his works. In his very first letter to the publisher Wigand (of August 4th, 1849; *cf.* the letter to Liszt of the same date), in the letter forwarding the MS. of *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, Wagner writes: "Unfortunately I have not yet found it possible here to procure any of Feuerbach's works except the third vol., with the *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*."[2] Wigand did not take the hint, for a year later, in June 1850, Wagner begs Uhlig to have Feuerbach's works sent to him through Wigand, and on July 27th of the same year he repeats his request. Long before this, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* was published; we know, therefore, for certain that when Wagner composed his first revolutionary works, and dedicated his *Kunstwerk der Zukunft* to Feuerbach, he knew nothing more of the works of that philosopher than the one youthful treatise we have mentioned.

What happened to Wagner here with Feuerbach was a very common occurrence with him all through his life. He admired Feuerbach upon trust. Animated by one of the earliest and most brilliant of his works (*Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*), a treatise in which he displays all his merits and few of his defects, exhibiting humour, wit and learning in short articles and aphorisms, without venturing on constructive work in the grand style, the master's poetic fancy was kindled for a Feuerbach with whom the real hermit of Bruckberg had very little in common. There were thoughts, too, in Feuerbach's *Tod und Unsterblichkeit* which entirely agreed with his own: *e.g.*, "highest being: community of being"; "death, the last fulfilment of love." "The artistic genius does not produce with understanding, will and consciousness." He was attracted by his repudiation of materialism as insufficient; his "hope for a historical future" and much more of the kind.[3] But these thoughts, too, appear in such a totally different light with Wagner, they are portions of a view of things so essentially different, that it is a mere verbal quibble to deduce any dependence of Wagner upon Feuerbach from them. Wagner really took nothing more from Feuerbach than a few words and concepts ("*Willkür*," "*Unwillkür*,"

[1] Unpublished letter; autograph in the possession of Monsieur Alfred Bovet.

[2] Unprinted letter. Autograph in the possession of Herr Doctor Potpischnegg.

[3] Feuerbach. *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 3, 16, 50, 55, 301.

"*Sinnlichkeit*," "*Not*" etc.); so little did they express the true thoughts of the master that at a later date (see the Introduction to vols. iii. and iv. of his collected writings) he had to explain them, in order to prevent incessant misunderstandings. Feuerbach too is in part responsible for the violent attacks upon the Christian Church in *Die Kunst und die Revolution;* it is in his *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit* that Feuerbach calls religion "the holy residue of the original coarseness, barbarism and superstition of the human race"; his later writings are much more moderate in tone, and he protests against his attitude to religion being regarded as one of negation only (*Ges. Schriften*, vii. 361).

In short Wagner's concepts were rather confused than made clearer by Feuerbach; he made it more difficult for Wagner to communicate what he had to say; but on the whole the influence is not of great importance. The favourable effect of the stimulus which Wagner received from Feuerbach was also slight.

Fortunate however it is that Wagner had finished his fundamental writings before he was able to study Feuerbach's real philosophy more thoroughly. From a letter to Roeckel of January 25, 1854, we see what disastrous effects might have been wrought by his "verbose chatter" upon so eager a mind, and Wagner here gives his friend a paraphrase of paragraph 30 and following paragraphs of Feuerbach's *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft.* "Truth, Reality and Sensibility are identical," and "only in love does the finite become infinite.[1] In many words of Wagner's letter the spirit of the artist suddenly flashes up; still we feel ourselves surrounded and suffocated by the leaden atmosphere of Feuerbach's impotence, and Wagner's remark shortly afterwards to Roeckel, that when he wrote before he was "estranged from himself" (R., 65), is evidently true. But he soon found himself again, for a few weeks after the letter of January 1854 there came as "a gift from Heaven in his solitude" (L., ii. 45), Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung.* The spell was broken.

Much more might be said about Feuerbach; especially it might be observed that there are many points of contact between him and Schopenhauer, and that these are exactly the points which Wagner mastered, so that although Feuerbach mostly attacks Schopenhauer, whose works he never studied till late in his life, and whose name he never once spells correctly, he nevertheless could and did serve Wagner as a stepping-stone to Schopenhauer.[2]

This transitory significance is the only one which we can admit to the noble-hearted, lovable man with respect to Wagner's life.

[1] Feuerbach. *Ges. Schr.*, ii. 321, 323.

[2] In later life Feuerbach felt more drawn to Schopenhauer. In a posthumous fragment, *Zur Moralphilosophie*, he writes: "Schopenhauer, who is distinguished from all German speculative philosophers by his directness, clearness, and preciseness, rejects the empty moral principles of other philosophers, and has designated sympathy as the foundation of morality" (*cf.* Carl Grün, *L. Feuerbach in seinem Briefwechsel und Nachlass*, p. 294); Feuerbach himself even dons the title of pessimist (p. 320).

Wagner and Schopenhauer.

Feuerbach provided Wagner with some formulas for his thoughts; Schopenhauer gave him a form. Feuerbach's immense learning may have supplied Wagner with material; building stones, bricks, rubble, marble blocks. Schopenhauer stood beside him as the architect.

Feuerbach was a protestant theologian and a pupil of Hegel. Notwithstanding the freedom of his thought, he never quite lost the narrowness of the clerical; the professed theologian clings to him as firmly as the priest's surplice to Ernest Renan.[1] Nor do we find in him as in Kant (the great "abstract") the least genius for geometry; notwithstanding his desperate endeavours to strike root in healthy empiricism, Feuerbach remained above in the dry air of abstract conceptual philosophy, a poor parasite on the withered tree of Hegelism. And as for Feuerbach's rationalistic campaign against the church, it was like that of the democrats of forty-eight against royalty: small thoughts, small means, small results. Schopenhauer on the other hand in starting from the premiss: *All truth and wisdom lie ultimately in observation*, revolutionized philosophy from its very foundation. His boldness really showed itself in his attack upon the source of all rationalism, whether pious or free-thinking, reactionary or revolutionist; that is, it consisted in his enunciation of the subordination of the intellect to the will, and of abstract knowledge to perception. In the person of Schopenhauer, Kant's dictum is exemplified: "Genius with the Germans strikes more to the root." With unfailing instinct, like that of a tree, Schopenhauer avoided all innutritious soil, and sent his roots to seek nourishment only in the best, but in *all* that was best; Christianity, the ancient Aryan religious philosophy of India, the entire range of human art, from Phidias to Beethoven, the various departments of natural science, all these he had profoundly studied, in all of them he possessed a thorough technical training; the same with metaphysical thought, wherever its most luminous rays had appeared, and only there, from Plato to Kant. Such is the rich prolific soil of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Its individual conformation is in a certain sense secondary: it may not suit everybody; here the personal equation may have to be applied; between Wagner and Schopenhauer were incisive divergences. But he who builds upon Schopenhauer builds upon a rock; that Wagner clearly saw, and remained true to him from 1854 until his death. Feuerbach was a passing episode, the last echo of the *dumme Streiche* of the revolution. The acquaintance with Schopenhauer, "the most genial of mankind," as Graf Leo Tolstoi calls him, is the most important event in Wagner's whole life. Now for the first time his metaphysical yearning was provided with an efficient receptacle in this all-embracing view of the world; now at last the marvellously ramified elements of his own being (R., 65), as thinker and poet, were united again in his breast to a harmonious personality, conscious in every detail—the thinker meditated more deeply, the artist gained strength, the views of the politician became

[1] Max Stirner has excellently said in his *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*, Feuerbach only gives us a *theological* liberation from Theology and Religion.

clearer, the Christian spirit, that of sympathy, of longing for redemption, of steadfastness till death, of resignation to the will of a higher Power, returned to the heart, from which many years before had issued *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *Der Holländer*. Over the *Meister's* work-table there hung only the picture of the great seer, and in 1868 he wrote to Lenbach, the painter of the magnificent portrait: "I have one hope for German culture, that the time will come when Schopenhauer will be the law-giver for all our thought and cognition."[1]

Kinship with Schopenhauer.

Wagner's adoption of Schopenhauer's philosophy directly he became acquainted with it, and his adherence to it all his life, are due to the fact that it had been his from the first—not as a system of concepts, but as an instinct, and especially as an artistic intuition. Some have described his adoption of Schopenhauer's philosophy in 1854 as the result of intellectual development, but this is quite wrong; he would have adopted it in 1844 had fortune brought *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* into his hands at that time. Schopenhauer was, for him, not the discovery of a new country, but the return to his own first home. Only the clear mind of Schopenhauer revealed to him in this, his ancient home, many things which he had not seen clearly before. A short time after he had read Schopenhauer's principal work through for the first time, Wagner wrote to Liszt: "His main thought—the final negation of the will for life—is terribly solemn, but it alone brings release. *To me of course it was not new, nor can anyone think it in whom it was not living before.* But it was this philosopher who first awakened my mind to the clear perception" (L., ii. 45). Plenty of evidence could be brought to show that not only this thought of Schopenhauer, but other of his fundamental views, had taken definite form in Wagner's mind long before 1854.

The will.

On the very first page of *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849), we read: "Nature creates and fashions without purpose and spontaneously according to its needs, therefore of necessity: the same necessity is the creating and forming force in human life—only that which is purposeless and spontaneous springs from a real need, and need alone is the source of life. Man recognizes necessity in Nature only in the interconnection of its phenomena; so long as he fails to grasp this it appears arbitrary"[2] (iii. 53). These are Kant-Schopenhauer

[1] Schemann: *Schopenhauer-Briefe*, p. 510. That Wagner did not stand alone in this view is proved by the following words of Deussen, in the first vol. of his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, which appeared in 1894. "Kant is the founder, Schopenhauer the completer, of a homogeneous metaphysical system of doctrine strictly founded in experience and strictly in harmony with itself, a system which will become and will remain in the future, as far as we can foresee, the foundation of all the scientific and religious thought of mankind."

[2] "Die Natur erzeugt und gestaltet absichtslos und unwillkürlich nach Bedürfnis, daher aus Notwendigkeit: dieselbe Notwendigkeit ist die zeugende und gestaltende Kraft des menschlichen Lebens; nur was absichtslos und unwillkürlich, entspringt dem wirklichen Bedürfnis, nur im Bedürfnisse liegt aber der Grund des Lebens. Die Notwendigkeit in der Natur erkennt der Mensch nur aus dem Zusammenhange ihrer Erscheinungen: so lange er diesen nicht erfasst, dünkt sie ihn Willkür."

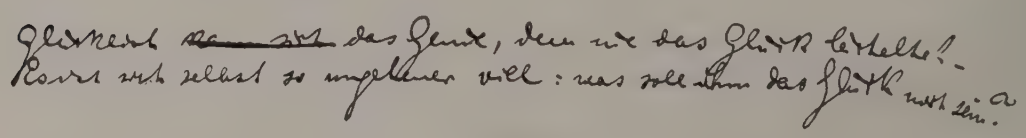
thoughts in the mask of Feuerbach. As an antithesis to Humboldt's "Nature is the empire of freedom," Schopenhauer had declared "necessity is the empire of nature." Wagner does not as yet, in these early writings, possess the concept of will, but he possesses the perception, and he torments himself in his Zurich writings with Feuerbach's terminology; "spontaneity," "necessity," "purposelessness," in the vain endeavour to understand himself and to make himself intelligible to others. The perfect agreement between him and Schopenhauer appears most unmistakably where he speaks of the laws which govern artistic productivity (*i.e.* productivity of genius). "The artist does not indeed proceed at once directly; his work is adjustive, selective, arbitrary, but exactly where he adjusts and selects, it has not yet become art; his procedure here is rather that of science, which seeks and examines, and is therefore arbitrary and erring. Not until his choice has fallen, and has fallen of necessity on what was necessary, does the art-work spring into life and become a self-determining, direct reality" (*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 57). Thus Wagner teaches; now let us hear Schopenhauer: "from the fact that the mode of cognition of genius is essentially that which is purified from all volition and whatever is related thereto, it follows that its works do not proceed from a purpose or an arbitrary intention; that it is on the contrary led by instinctive necessity" (*Sämmtliche Werke*, iii. 433). We meet in *Oper und Drama* with the astonishing sentence, "space and time are nothing in themselves" (iv., 253); I mention this merely in the parenthetical way in which it occurs in that work. Of decisive importance, however, is *the discrediting of abstract cognition with reference to observation.* This is an ever-recurring theme in Wagner's Zurich writings. A single quotation will make this clear. "However honest the endeavours of philosophy to grasp nature as a connected whole, they only succeeded in showing the insufficiency of abstract intelligence" (iii. 172). Herewith Wagner touches the centre of Schopenhauer's philosophy, distinguished as it is from all others, and owing as it does all its creative power to the fact that it declares abstract cognition to be "the secondary, the worse cognition, the mere shadow of true cognition." I have perhaps said too much in calling it the centre; but this recognition of the secondary nature of abstract intelligence with reference to observation is the decisive and genetically indispensable step to arrive at the true foundation of Schopenhauer's philosophy, which is *the recognition of the secondary nature of the intellect itself.* Did Wagner take this last decisive step before he knew Schopenhauer? Perhaps not completely; but hint at it, prophetically point to it, he often did, especially in his later work, *Oper und Drama*, where his metaphysical thought had cleared itself very much in the high problem of the most perfect art-work. There we find such expressions as "the true consciousness is the knowledge of our unconsciousness . . . the understanding can achieve nothing more than the justification of the feeling, for it is itself but rest, following the generative agitation of the feeling; it justifies itself only when it knows itself conditioned by the spon-

taneous feeling"[1] (iv. 95).[2] Here and in similiar places Wagner approached very closely to the fundamental proposition of Schopenhauer; it is at least a presentiment, according to his own definition of this word: "the involuntary longing of the feelings for definition in an object which they again define in advance by the force of their need, as one which must answer to them, and for which they wait" (iv. 233). Wagner only waited for Schopenhauer.

Along with such remarkable cases of agreement in the domain of metaphysics we find many others, equally important, in that of ethics. They complete the picture of intellectual affinity.

Pessimism.

Pessimism, for instance, is always appearing with Wagner, in spite of his endeavours to believe in Feuerbach's doctrine of universal happiness (R., 66). Probably the soul of every man of vigorous temperament harbours pessimistic views in its depths; was not the last injunction even of Oliver Cromwell this: "Love not this world; I tell you, it is not good that you love this world." In the summer of 1852 Wagner writes: "My views on mankind become more and more dismal; it generally seems to me that the race must perish entirely" (U., 205). In January 1854 (ten days before the Feuerbach letter to Roeckel) he writes to Liszt: "I believe no more, and know only one hope—a sleep—a sleep so deep, so deep—that all the pain of life ceases" (L., ii. 6). As early as 1841 he had exclaimed:



Facsimile.[3]

And immediately after his aquaintance with Schopenhauer he sighs relieved: "It has long been difficult for me, in view of the phenomena which crowd before my notice, to preserve myself on a footing of optimism" (R., 54). In this connection too Wagner's enthusiasm for Hafiz in the years 1852-53 is very instructive. The true pessimist soil from which springs Hafiz's delight in life glimmers through many of his songs, and appears still more clearly in the poems of his great predecessor and prototype, Omar Khayyam. Of Hafiz Wagner says (in October 1852): "He is the greatest and sublimest philosopher; so certainly and irrefutably no one ever yet understood the world's secret" (U., 237).

[1] "Das richtige Bewusstsein ist Wissen von unserem Unbewusstsein . . . Der Verstand kann nichts anderes wissen als die Rechtfertigung des Gefühles, denn er selbst ist nur die Ruhe, welche der zeugenden Erregung des Gefühles folgt: er selbst rechtfertigt sich nur, wenn er aus dem unwillkürlichem Gefühle sich bedingt weiss. . . ."

[2] Entirely Plato, and just as entirely Schopenhauer, is the surprising thought, "true cognition is recognition" (iv. 95).

[3] "Happy the genius on whom happiness never smiled! It is so much to itself, what could happiness be more to it."

It is very remarkable that the Indian "*Tattvamasi*" is to be found as an artistic creed in a passage in *Oper und Drama*. Art is the fulfilment of the desire to find one's own self again in the phenomena of the outer world (*cf.* iv. 42). Still more remarkable is the strong emphasis laid upon sympathy as a moral impelling force in Wagner's writings and works, from the very first; this is the distinguishing mark of Wagner's moral individuality.

Sympathy.

In Wagner's story, *Eine Ende in Paris*, written in 1840, the starving German musician falls into a swoon, from which he is awakened by his faithful dog licking him: "I stood up, and in one lucid moment I at once recognised the most important of my duties: to obtain food for my dog. A discriminating *marchand-d'habits* handed me several *sous* for my bad *gilet*. My dog ate, and what he left I finished" (i. 161). To the same period belongs this beautiful passage on the hunter in *Freischütz*. "Ever since he has loved he is no longer the rough unsparing huntsman intoxicating himself with the blood of the slaughtered game; his maid has taught him to see God in Creation, to hear the mystic voices which speak to him out of the silence of the forest. He is now often seized with compassion when the roebuck springs lightly and gracefully through the thicket; then with hesitation and abhorrence he fulfils the duties of his calling, and he can weep when he sees the tear in the eye of the noble beast at his feet" (*Der Freischütz*, i. 261). Ten years before this, in his very first work for the stage, *Die Feen*, Wagner had found touching musical expression for the sympathy with animals in Arindal's words: "O Seht! das Tier Kann weinen! Die Thräne glänzt in Seinem Aug'; O! wie's gebrochen nach mir schaut!"[1]

Let us once more consider the points of relationship between Wagner and Schopenhauer.

Points of agreement with Schopenhauer.

With Schopenhauer metaphysics consists of three parts: metaphysics of Nature, metaphysics of the beautiful, metaphysics of morality. In the metaphysics of Nature Wagner had a presage of Schopenhauer's solution of the problem; in the metaphysics of the beautiful a complete parallelism with Schopenhauer, even before Wagner knew his philosophy, was only prevented by his faulty conceptional schema; in the metaphysics of morality there was spontaneous and absolute identity in the practical moral application, and the decided accentuation of sympathy with animals very clearly indicates that Wagner empirically, so to speak, saw through the *principium individuationis*. Richard Wagner might be likened to a man whose vision has, during a long night of darkness, become more acute, so that he is able to recognise all the objects around him, the nearer ones quite plainly, but the further ones only dimly, and as if mingled with the darkness. Then came Schopenhauer, and it was day! It is for this reason that I have dwelt so strongly upon the agreement between Wagner's philosophical convictions and the doctrines of Schopenhauer even *before he knew the name of*

[1] See the facsimile in the first part of chap. iii.

Schopenhauer. From this too it is clear that if Wagner had died in 1854 we should almost certainly misinterpret his earlier writings, since, as he says himself, "his concepts did not at that time agree with his perceptions"; but now everything is clear as daylight, because Schopenhauer found him the concepts for these perceptions which had long lived within him. What took place therefore was in no sense an inversion, nor was it the discovery of a world unknown before, but it was the light of day thrown upon that which was already there. The difference is indeed as great as that between day and night—but it is not greater.

Another inference may be drawn from what has been said.

Not only to understand those of Wagner's writings which were composed before the Schopenhauer period, but also for his later, more mature philosophical views, we must be thoroughly at home in Schopenhauer's philosophy. For the artist never dreamed of saying again what the great philosopher had already said once in the only adequate form. He disdained even to make alterations and amendments in his writings of the Zurich period, conceiving that the difficulties which they present to the understanding in their present form are "a peculiar recommendation to the earnest student" (Dedication to the second edition of *Oper und Drama*, 1863, viii. 248). Once only, in his *Beethoven* (1870), did Wagner write what may be called a philosophical supplement to Schopenhauer's *Metaphysik der Musik*. This supplement was necessary, inasmuch as the philosopher, though he opened the way into this domain, nevertheless, owing to his imperfect acquaintance with musical works, passed over many a wide prospect which his own philosophy opened out, and committed errors in details.[1] For the rest however it is significant that Wagner henceforward touches less upon purely philosophical problems than formerly; he always pre-supposes Schopenhauer, and builds on, whether on the ground of art or on that of society and religion.[2] Whoever would know Wagner's philosophy therefore must have studied that of Schopenhauer.

Points of disagreement with Schopenhauer.

The points in which Wagner differed from Schopenhauer require a no less accurate acquaintance with the philosopher. These differences do not appear till later, and, at least in their most important phases, especially towards the end of Wagner's life. Space would not permit me to dwell upon the details of these differences; it will suffice for me to refer to the principal work of the master's last years—*Religion und Kunst* ("Religion and Art").

Here Wagner rejects *absolute pessimism*, and says: "the so-called pessimistic view could here only appear justified to us on the supposition that it rests upon a historical estimate of mankind; it would have to undergo some important modifications, could we know pre-historic man sufficiently to be able to infer from his nature, as we perceive it, a later process of degeneration, the cause of

[1] *Cf.* Asher's *Arthur Schopenhauer: Neues von ihm und über ihn.*

[2] *Cf.* the following section of this chapter.

which does not lie in his original nature itself"[1] (*Religion und Kunst*, x. 304, *cf.* also 311). Whoever wishes to realize the enormous divergence between this "historical pessimism" and Schopenhauer's "metaphysical pessimism" should read *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Book iv. sect. 53, where Schopenhauer says amongst other things: "we are of opinion that anyone who supposes that he can by any possibility grasp the nature of the world by the historical method, however cleverly it may be masked, is very far from a philosophical cognition thereof; this he does if in his view of the world *per se* there is contained any idea of *becoming*, or of *having become*, or of *going to become*, or if the slightest significance is attached to the ideas of *earlier* or *later*" etc.[2] Wagner too, in the place just quoted, gives an account of the origin of beasts of prey in consequence of geological cataclysms and subsequent famines,[3] which could not possibly have met with the approval of the philosopher who teaches: "where a living being breathes there at once appears another to devour it"; who knew too that in this beast of prey every detail of the whole organism is designed for the seizure of prey, a fact which Schopenhauer regards metaphysically as an immediate effect, or more correctly as the phenomenon, the picture, the objectivation of the will. "The Will is the first thing. . . . Every special impulse of the will appears in a special modification of the form. Hence the home of the prey came to determine the form of the pursuer" (*loc. cit.*, iv. 46). Indeed the entire substance of the third section of *Religion und Kunst*, the story of a historical degeneration of the human race, and of a redemption positively to be looked for through regeneration (whereby the negation of the will is interpreted as the negation of a negative—*i.e.*, an affirmation) is scarcely to be reconciled with Schopenhauer's teaching. Schopenhauer speaks approvingly of the doctrine of the fall of mankind as a metaphysical truth, but, as he adds in explanation, only an allegorical truth; it has for him the same metaphorical significance as the doctrine of metempsychosis for the Indian thinkers. This too gives mythical expression to a metaphysical truth, and *regeneration* is for Schopenhauer neither more nor less than a myth. "True salvation, release from life and from suffering, is not conceivable without complete negation of the will" (*loc. cit.*, iv. 470). Just as little would Wagner's views on vegetarianism and on *original* inequality of the human races find favour with Schopenhauer.

Does this bring to light a profound antagonism between Wagner and Schopenhauer? Or does the poet, after being instructed by the philosopher, appear as a conscious creator of myths.[4]

[1] "Die sogenannte pessimistische Weltansicht müsste uns hierbei nur unter der Voraussetzung als berechtigt erscheinen, dass sie sich auf die Beurtheilung des *gesehichtlichen* Menschen begründe; sie würde jedoch bedeutend modifiziert werden müssen, wenn der vorgeschichtliche Mensch uns so weit bekannt würde, dass wir aus seiner richtig wahrgenommenen Naturanlage auf eine später eingetretene Entartung schliessen könnten, welche nicht unbedingt in jener Naturanlage begründet lag."

[2] Schopenhauer's *Sämmtliche Werke.* (Frauenstädt) 2nd edition, ii. 322.

[3] Wagner adopted this view from the French apostle of vegetarianism, Gleïzes. *Cf.* his *Thalysia.*

[4] *Cf. Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?* x. 335.

This book is, as we have remarked, not the place for an exhaustive consideration of so wide a question. The author would have to express his own views, whereas his object really is to engage the reader's attention to everything essential in Richard Wagner himself, whilst leaving his own judgment free (*cf.* however in the following section the discussion on the philosophic doctrine of regeneration). Strange, and at the first moment rather perplexing, is the fact which appears from all that has been said, that Wagner makes more the impression of an orthodox "Schopenhauerite" before his acquaintance with Schopenhauer than he does afterwards.

We shall never get to the bottom of these paradoxes and contradictions and enigmas unless we remember that the theoretical, philosophical element is only a fragment of Wagner's entire being. He is an artist not only before all things, but in all things. In a letter to Roeckel he confesses how little like a philosopher he feels, and he adds, "I can only speak in art-works" (R., 69).

Art and philosophy.

The danger of the attempt to find a philosophic meaning in works of art is very strikingly illustrated by Wagner himself. In the year 1852 he wrote of his *Nibelungenring*, "All my views of the world have found their complete artistic expression therein" (U., 192). These views he then interpreted in a philosophical sense as pointing to a "hellenistic-optimistic world"; two years later he discovered in the self-same work, which had since undergone no alteration, a Germanic-pessimistic view of the world! (R., 66; compare with each other the letters iv. and vii. to Roeckel). "The artist stands before his work—if it really is a work of art—as before a puzzle, regarding which he may fall into just the same errors as any other person": those are Wagner's own words (R., 65); they ought to suffice to protect at least his own works from the craze of our time for interpretation, a craze as inartistic as it is philosophically useless.

The lesson, however, which we both can and must learn from these works, is that an artist can only in a very restricted sense be regarded as a philosopher. Unquestionably the artist is superior to the philosopher in many respects; unquestionably genial art contains "all wisdom" (as Schopenhauer says), whereas genial philosophy contains only one fragment of wisdom. But just because, and just in so far as genial art contains—or rather reveals—*all* wisdom, it does not contain any one particular wisdom. For the nature of the human mind is such that not breadth, but sharpness, penetrates deepest; reason can only reach the metaphysical centre when it attacks the world at one point and there bores its way in, like the *Lithodomus* into granite. It is natural to suppose that the creative artist would never be able to acquire this indispensable one-sidedness; we must not therefore expect that the artist will ever subordinate himself to the philosopher, or fully assimilate his doctrine; nor should we ever be justified in counting a Shakespeare, a Goethe, a Vinci, or a Wagner to any particular philosophical school.

Very interesting, however, it is to observe the mutual reaction between the artist and the philosopher.

The high value which Schopenhauer laid upon art and upon the artist, who "understands the half-expressed thoughts of Nature, and now pronounces clearly what she only falters," is well known. His philosophy drew its wisdom from art.

The case was similar with Wagner after Schopenhauer had initiated him into true philosophy. He says: "in a decisive catastrophe of my inner life it gave me fortitude and strength for resignation" (R., 53). In another place he calls it "a gift from heaven" (L., 45). Remarkable, too, is the fact that the acquaintance with Schopenhauer's philosophy gave a stimulus to Wagner's artistic productivity; the music of *Die Walküre*, the idea of *Tristan*, the figure of *Parsifal*, all date from that momentous year 1854. The clearing effect of this philosophy upon his artistic views is evident in his next great work, *Zukunftsmusik* (1860); its purifying influence on his thoughts on religion and society will be sufficiently seen in his works *Ueber Staat und Religion* (1864), and *Deutsche Kunst und Deutsche Politik* (1865); the greatest metaphysical depth is reached in his *Beethoven* (1870). But the stimulus is quite general; it is a strengthening of the entire man. On beholding the might of the congenial "art-inspired" philosopher, the fire of his own genius broke forth again into high-ascending flames. Schopenhauer's pessimism was the only doctrine which could bring comfort to the bold prophet of a better future, when his hopes had proved vain in every point. And by the immense importance which Schopenhauer laid upon art he strengthened the artist's faith in himself. Quite fanciful is the common notion that the effect of Schopenhauer was to impart a philosophical character to Wagner's art. On the contrary, we meet with the same process in his art as in his writings: Wagner remained more strictly within the pale of Schopenhauer's philosophy *before* he knew Schopenhauer than he did afterwards! *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and above all, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, are the four works in which the tragic negation of the will to live—though appearing in very different forms—may not unjustly be regarded as the pivot of the action. From the standpoint of pure philosophy the negation of the will appears most directly in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, where both heroes, one taught by suffering, the other by intuitive sympathy, solemnly renounce the will for life; this is really the only meaning of the drama, for even death itself can here only be regarded as an allegory, denoting the release by negation. But also with *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, the poet himself acknowledged at a later date that, "if any characteristic poetic feature is expressed in them, it is the high tragedy of renunciation, that which alone avails; the negation of the will fully justified, and at last following of necessity" (R., 66). In the *Nibelungenring* the entire action turns upon the conflict between cognition and will in Wotan's heart. Here the analogy with Schopenhauer is so striking that the direct influence of the philosopher was generally taken for granted, until a comparison of dates showed that the plan of the poem in its present form was ready in the autumn of 1851, and the poem itself printed at the beginning of 1853; whilst Wagner first heard Schopen-

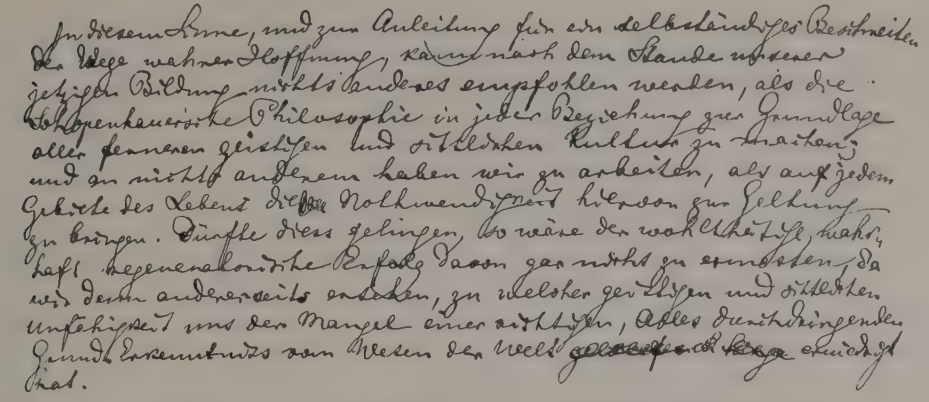
hauer's name in the winter of 1853-54, and did not study his works until the spring of 1854, so that any influence of the philosopher on the poet is out of the question. Indeed we know now that the case is in a certain sense just the contrary! Wagner, it is said, was only induced to venture once more upon the study of speculative philosophy by his friends Herwegh and Wille drawing his attention to the wonderful correspondence existing between the views which seemed to be expressed in his *Nibelungenring* and the philosophy of Schopenhauer.[1] Nevertheless it seems to us as if Wagner, when fully possessed of Schopenhauer's world of thought, felt himself in some sense less fettered as an artist. *Tristan und Isolde* is the highest glorification, the apotheosis of the affirmation of the will to live. For Tristan the world contained only Isolde; that is, only the object of his desire, and Isolde dies the *Liebestod*, "love-death!" The night, of which Tristan and Isolde sing in such glorious strains in the second act, is the "night of love," the night "wo Liebeswonne uns lacht" "where love-delight laughs to us"! Truly a Nirvâṇá of which neither the holy Gotama nor the wise Schopenhauer ever dreamed! And the often-cited "Selbst dann bin ich die Welt"—"I am then myself the world"—cannot possibly be seriously taken as the utterance of a world-renouncing sage,—a twice-born "Givanmukta"; for Tristan is lying in the arms of his beloved when he says it, and immediately before are the words: "Herz an Herzdir, Mund an Mund!" If Isolde and Tristan curse the sun of day, it is because the sun ever delights in their sufferings whilst Schopenhauer teaches that "negation consists in abhorring, not the pains, but the enjoyments of life" (*Sämmtl. Werke*, ii. 471). If this drama contains philosophy at all, it is the direct opposite to that of the negation of the will. Buddha fled from his young and lovely wife to become wise. Tristan's life is only maintained by one thing, "ein heiss inbrünstig Lieben," an ardent glowing love. But what must be regarded as decisive once for all is the fact that sympathy, which played such a prominent part in all Wagner's earlier works, is entirely absent in *Tristan*. This matchless work therefore is neither metaphysically nor morally dependent upon Schopenhauer. The same may be said of *Parsifal*. Here we do indeed meet with sympathy as a central idea of the drama, but nowhere is there a trace of negation of the will: the strict pessimistic *resignation* (which was to have found expression in *Die Sieger*, had the sketch ever been carried out) has yielded to *action*.

Wagner's philosophy.

We shall therefore do well not to mix up art and philosophy with Wagner. Especially we should see that Wagner's view of the world—in the widest sense—is by no means exhausted in his philosophical creed, or even adequately expressed therein. Wagner's faith in Schopenhauer was indeed unbounded, but metaphysics was for him not the crown, but the foundation of his intellectual life; in Schopenhauer he saw that "ideal teacher" of whom Kant had spoken

[1] Hausegger. *Richard Wagner und Schopenhauer*, p. 4. An ingenious exegetist might infer from passages here and there in Wagner's Zurich writings an influence on the part of Joh. Duns Scotus with his celebrated doctrine: *Voluntas Superior intellectu!*

half prophetically. The following words will show how highly Wagner valued him in this field.



Facsimile, "Was nützt diese Erkenntnis." R. W., Collected Works, x. p. 330.[1]

Wagner's philosophy, and in particular his belief in Schopenhauer, is only one link in the chain, or better, one organ in his complex artistic individuality. In order of time, the close occupation with speculative philosophy succeeded that with political and social problems. Artistic speculation could never be an end in itself; nor was the idea of redemption by knowledge, which Schopenhauer had borrowed from the Indians, fitted to warm or to satisfy his heart; and so we soon see Wagner return to the great social problems. Redemption by knowledge is the redemption of the single individual; the metaphysician may rest content therewith, for in the metaphysical understanding he redeems with himself the entire phenomenal world. But Wagner is not in this sense a metaphysician. He is in the same position as Goethe, who adopted the creed of Spinoza although he rejected the monistic idea as sterile: "With the doctrine of universal oneness," says Goethe, "as much is gained as is lost, and at the end there remains the Zero, just as comforting as it is comfortless." Truly Wagner was not the man to remain satisfied with a Zero. Metaphysics was for him an instrument, a weapon. What he had taught before about community, and about the merging of egoism in communism, remained his ideal. Instructed by Schopenhauer, and by the other experiences of his life, he returns to the problem which has always occupied him, and devotes the strength of his last years to the great question of regeneration of the human race, which will be treated of in the next section of this chapter.

[1] "In this sense, and to help us to set out independently on the paths of true hope, the present state of our development points to Schopenhauer's philosophy as in every respect fitted to become the foundation of all future intellectual and moral culture; we have now to use every exertion to induce men to see the necessity for this in every province of life. Should we succeed, the beneficial result for regeneration will be immeasurable; for we may observe the helpless state to which we have been reduced, intellectually and morally, by the absence of any fundamental, all-embracing cognition of the nature of the world."

Wagner's position in the general development of the human mind, that which may perhaps be called, not his philosophy, but his philosophical significance, can be estimated only when we know his doctrines of regeneration and of art, and especially when we know his art-works. An estimate of his philosophical significance must therefore be deferred to the close of the book. In Chap. iv. sec. 2, under "*the Bayreuth Idea*," some observations will be made with a view to obtaining a right understanding of this matter.

SCHILLER

3

Richard Wagner's Doctrine of Regeneration

"He who will not venture beyond
reality will never conquer truth."

SCHILLER.

Simplest form.

"We recognize the cause of the decadence of historical man and the necessity of his regeneration, we believe in the possibility of the regeneration and devote ourselves thereto in every sense" (*Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?*,[1] x. 336).

These words of Richard Wagner, written in 1880, exhibit very clearly the substance of his practical doctrine of regeneration. We see that it consists of two parts, closely connected with each other: a negative and an affirmative. The present conformation of human society (the modern state and its churches) is conceived as the result of a process of progressive decadence, and is rejected. On the other hand the recognition of the causes of the decadence leads to the acknowledgment of the possibility of regeneration.

But we wish above all to establish one point before entering more particularly into details: the negation here is not metaphysical but empirical, the affirmation is not mystic but positive, and points to a historical future. Our decadence is due to material causes; material remedies, or rather the removal of those causes, will bring us back to the right path, to "our lost Paradise now consciously regained."

The three doctrines of regeneration.

Our enquiry into Wagner's political and philosophical thoughts was much impeded by the circumstance that they only occurred as accessory parts of expositions in other fields of thought. We had to search for them amongst a

[1] *Erkenntniss, i.e.* recognition of the fall of historical man.

mass of writings and letters, and the fact that his views were nowhere systematically laid down made it difficult to define them sharply. The doctrine of regeneration on the other hand forms the main subject of a whole series of essays, and is formulated so clearly that it would seem as if we were standing upon *terra firma*, and that it must be easy to follow a course of thought worked out so lucidly and in such detail, and to reproduce it to ourselves on a diminished scale. But a new obstacle appears in the way; in this *practical* doctrine of regeneration, philosophy and religion play such an important part that to pass them over would be to misrepresent Wagner's thoughts most seriously. And if we are to include philosophy and religion together with our practice, we shall have three doctrines of regeneration—one practical, one philosophical, and one religious. Each of these pre-supposes the two others while yet appearing to contradict them in important points! The harmony of this philosophy—for Wagner's doctrine of regeneration is a complete and far-reaching philosophy—will appear when we have mastered every part; the single parts however will present serious difficulties, until we have been able to overlook the whole, and so to perceive the organic connection of things apparently contradictory.

Let us for instance consider the philosophical doctrine of regeneration for a moment.

Along with the simple, practical doctrine of regeneration, we find continual references to Schopenhauer's philosophy; it serves Wagner in a certain sense as a foundation. Now this philosophy indeed contemplates a metaphysical "rebirth," which is regarded as seeing through the principle of individuality, and consequent inversion of the will. No philosophic writer however would have ventured, either here or in any other part of Schopenhauer's system, to find any indication of a doctrine of regeneration of mankind, still less the foundation for such a doctrine. Wagner however, who is here not a philosopher but an artistic seer, is not disturbed by such considerations. He neither neglects the metaphysical perception of the thinking individual, nor the convictions which have forced themselves upon him in his living observations of the history of the whole human race. In that same work, for instance, which contains the positive doctrine of regeneration with which this section begins, Wagner quotes with approval Schopenhauer's words: "Peace, rest, happiness dwell where there is no *where* and no *when*," and in the same place he speaks of: "the soul affrighted at the illusion of the real appearance of the world" (x. 333). One cannot help feeling staggered at first. Are we then to devote ourselves to carrying out a regeneration which can nowhere and never be achieved? Are we to build up a historical future on a historical past, when the reality of the appearance of this world is altogether an illusion? In Wagner's view doubts of this sort express a mere *logical* contradiction; their value is *nil* as against all that we see and must acknowledge in the truths which Nature offers to us. We have here the same phenomenon as that which I have already referred to in detail in the section on

politics, the simultaneous subsistence of contradictory propositions, contradictory however only in appearance, in reality complementary and essential portions of a mighty intelligence, an intelligence which is above all things truthful, and truthful to itself, which is an organic growth and is not hampered by systematic lies.

In Wagner's consciousness are to be found, side by side, metaphysical negation and practical affirmation. To these there comes a third—religion.

Practical regeneration is expressly spoken of as attainable, but it can only succeed if we are "bold and believing" (iii. 77); this Wagner requires in 1849, and in 1880 he writes: "Only from the deep soil of a true religion can the inducement and the strength proceed which are necessary for carrying through the regeneration." It is in religion that the opposites of perception joyous with life, and cognition weighty with thought, of optimism and pessimism, are reconciled. But a new difficulty arises in the fact that our religion itself has undergone decadence, so that its immediate application to the purpose of regeneration is not possible (x. 310); on the other hand again: "the artist cannot invent religions; they always grow out of the heart of the people" (iii. 77). We are therefore thrown back upon a religious foundation which, as we understand Wagner's own words, does not at present exist.

At the close of this section I shall return to the point, and endeavour to explain this apparent inner discord. For the present I merely draw attention to the extreme difficulty of stating Wagner's optimistic doctrine of regeneration, owing to the pessimist philosophy which accompanies it throughout, like a *basso continuo*, and also to its assumption of a religion which is yet to grow out of the Christian revelation (x. 288). My endeavour will be to state the matter as simply and as clearly as possible, but I cannot conceal from myself the application of Omar Khayyam's words,

"A hair perhaps divides the false and true,"

and I do not flatter myself that I shall always be able to keep on the right side of this narrow boundary.

Division of the enquiry.

The discussion of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration will naturally fall into two parts: the negation and the affirmation. The negative element is the recognition of the decadence; and this forms the foundation for the affirmation of the faith in the possibility of regeneration. Before entering on the subject it will be well to state exactly which of Wagner's writings are to be regarded as directly dealing with regeneration.

Sources.

In the narrower sense they are the works of his later years: *Religion und Kunst* (1880), and the others which group themselves round this principal work: *Wollen wir hoffen?* ("Shall we hope") (1879), *Offenes Schreiben an Ernst von Weber, über die Vivisektion* ("On vivisection") (1879), *Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?* ("Of what use is this knowledge?") (1880), *Erkenne dich Selbst* ("Know thyself"), and *Heldenthum und Christenthum* ("The heroic age and Christianity")

(1881).[1] The last words of this last work are: "having herewith reached our ground" (in the preceding sentence he had spoken of "the great poets and artists of the past") "we will collect our thoughts for the further consideration of the subject" (x. 362). These words and many similar indications lead us to conjecture that after having in the series *Religion und Kunst* laid the principal weight upon religion—as being the foundation of every true regeneration—a second series was to have followed, and that this intention was frustrated by the master's death. We may suppose that the second group would have been entitled "Art and Religion," or "Art and Regeneration," with the emphasis on the word *Art*. For, notwithstanding that in his later writings, which I have named, art is always pointed to as being, after religion, the most important factor of regeneration, we nowhere find any detailed discussion of art, either in its inner nature or in its external operation. The second series of essays on regeneration does however exist; it was written thirty years earlier! Of course the *Meister* in his seventieth year would have expressed many things otherwise than he did in his thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh year; still there is no breach of continuity, for everything in his Zurich writings which might have given rise to misunderstanding is explained in *Religion und Kunst*. The Zurich writings then, *die Kunst und die Revolution*, *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849), *Kunst und Klima* (1850), *Oper und Drama*, *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde* (1851), form a second group (in order of time the first) of works on regeneration, the group which is required to complete the series *Religion und Kunst*, and in these the stress is indeed laid upon Art. The leading thought of both groups is exactly the same: *Art cannot really come to maturity in the present state of society; this is only possible in a regenerated society; but without the coöperation of art regeneration is impracticable.* Even in his *Vaterlandsverein* speech in 1848, Wagner had defined his object to be "the complete rebirth of human society." And in one passage of his later writings on regeneration he expressly refers to his former works: "And so I return, undeterred by the circuity of the path, to the thoughts which I conceived regarding this relation thirty years ago, and now declare that my subsequent life-experience has shown me nothing to alter in the boldest expressions which I then used" (*Wollen wir hoffen?* x. 162). In short, the idea of regeneration pervades the entire second half of the master's life. It is fully elucidated in the two groups of works already named, as also in the others, more especially: *Ueber die Goethestiftung*, *Ein Theater in Zürich*, *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, *Zukunftsmusik*, *Staat und Religion*, *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, *Beethoven*, *Ueber die Bestimmung der Oper*, *Was ist Deutsch?* *Modern*, *Publicum und Popularität*, *Das Publicum in Zeit und Raum*. All these either presuppose the idea of regeneration, or stand in some relation thereto, and we may regard them all as sources for the knowledge of Wagner's doctrine.

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[1] Also the treatise *Ueber das Weibliche im Menschlichen*, which Wagner began two days before his death, would have been amongst these.

Recognition of the decadence.

Those who live in the faith that mankind is constantly advancing, and that there is no reason to imagine any end to this eternal progress—and this is probably the belief of the majority—will never admit the necessity, or even the possibility of regeneration. The very conception of regeneration assumes two hypotheses—first, the belief in the original goodness (at least relatively) of man, in so far as his life and his development take place in harmony with his own nature and that of his surroundings; secondly, the conviction that historical mankind has wandered from the right path and strayed further and further from the healthy and natural course of its development. What, therefore, one regards as progress is for the other decadence. The antithesis is a true logical *contrary*, and consequently very easy to grasp.[1]

It is possible to regard decadence as the work of a destiny against which no efforts can avail, as an inevitable deterioration of the powers, similar to that of the individual in old age. Or it might be the product of a real *degeneration*, in which case the recognition of the fact must be the first and most important step towards regeneration. Could we but ascertain the causes of degeneration, then the regeneration would appear not only worthy of attainment, but as a thing really to be hoped for. Wagner therefore says, "The hypothesis of a degeneration of the human race, however much it may seem to contradict that of steady progress, may possibly, when seriously considered, be the only one from which we can draw any reasonable hope for the future. If we are justified in supposing the degeneration to have been caused by overpowering external influences, which the prehistoric man, in his inexperienced state, was unable to resist, then the history of man, as we know it, must be viewed as that of his period of suffering, whilst his faculties were being developed to apply the experience which he had gained in combating those hostile influences." And further on, he writes: "The history of this decadence might, if we regard it as the school of suffering of the human race, teach us that our task now is with conscious purpose to make good the damage caused by the blind authority of the will which shapes the world, and which has prevented the achievement of the unconscious aims of humanity as it were to build anew the house which the storm has demolished, and to ensure it against further damage" (*Religion und Kunst*, x. 304 and 315).

It is very characteristic of Wagner that from the moment when his artistic work brought him into contact with public institutions, he at once saw and denounced everything that was bad in our social state. Never has he had a

[1] To prevent misunderstandings I must observe that Wagner never denies the capacity of the human race for development; only he holds that it should take place "in rational harmony with his nature" (iii. 262), not by progressive departure therefrom. Just as little does he dispute that "the process of human development is not retrogression towards a pristine state, but progress: retrogression is never natural, but always artificial" (iv. 188). What Wagner does not subscribe to is the notion of simple people that the new is in every case a higher, a better state, a state answering in a more noble way to the "holy laws of Nature," than the old; throughout Nature degeneration always lies nearer to hand than improvement; regarded from below this line of movement appears as advance, from above as retrogression.

word of approval for the "chaos of modern civilization"; never did he believe in its so-called "progress." In his speech in the *Vaterlandsverein* (1848) he speaks of "mankind as sorely degraded and suffering." In *Kunst und Revolution* he calls the progress of culture "hostile to man" (iii. 39); in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* the fundamental importance of recognizing the decadence is very clearly expressed. Wagner speaks of the future and says: "The force of our need impels us only to a quite general perception of how we are to conceive the antithesis of our present admittedly corrupt conditions not only as the heart desires, but as a necessary inference of the reason" (iii. 202). In this work too he lays the greatest stress upon negation in its special significance as an indispensable preliminary to affirmation. "The people has only to negative in deed what is indeed nothing—unnecessary, superfluous, *nil* . . . and the *something* of the unriddled future will at once present itself" (iii. 67). At exactly the same time (the end of 1849) he wrote to Uhlig: "only demolition is now required; all new-building must for the present be arbitrary" (U., 21). But he soon learnt to see that the root of the evil lay deeper, and in October 1850 we already meet with the word degeneration: "Wherever we look in the civilized world, we find the degeneration of mankind" (U., 71). The causes of the degeneration are, even at that time, sought where he believed that he found them thirty years later, especially in our food. To this I shall return. Three months later Wagner speaks in *Oper und Drama* of "the fearful demoralization of our modern social conditions, so revolting to every genuine man," and towards the close of the same work he says: "Shall we seek to make terms with this world? No! for however humiliating the conditions, *we* should be excluded from them. . . . Neither faith nor courage will be ours until we listen for the pulse of history, and hear the eternal stream of life flowing in pristine freshness, inexhaustible, though at the present buried beneath the ruin of historical civilization" (iv. 257-281). In his *Mittheilung an meine Freunde* he says: "I was able frankly to tell this world that with all its sanctimonious concern for art and culture, I despised it from the bottom of my heart, that in its veins there flowed not one drop of true artistic blood; that it was incapable of giving out one breath of human excellence, one breath of human beauty" (iv. 406). These are utterances from his earliest writings on regeneration. It must not be supposed that in the works of his old age he dealt more gently with our civilization. He calls it "heartless and bad," it aims only at "the correct application of calculating egoism," it is "profoundly immoral," "a world of murder and robbery, organized and legalized by lying, deception and hypocrisy," it "transforms men into monsters" (x. 302, 309, 310, 395, 264), etc., etc. Everything which he has said on this point is comprised in the following words: "the task which devolves upon the spirit of truthfulness is that of recognising our culture and civilization as the misbegotten progeny of the lies of the human race."[1]

[1] Let not Wagner be misunderstood; his attack is not directed against culture, but only against what he regards as our inartistic and immoral culture. "Only through culture is a man a social and

So much with regard to Wagner's negative attitude towards our civilization. The number of quotations could be multiplied indefinitely, and it would never end if we wanted to pick out everything which Wagner has said against the modern State, "which only lives on the vices of society" (iv. 82), and against the religion "from which God has been discarded," "the impotent religion of churches" (x. 166). Here we are merely concerned with the recognition of the decadence on principle. This we see was present with Wagner throughout his life.

The causes of the decadence.

From the very first we find Wagner seeking for the causes of the decadence. We may gather from this that his absolute condemnation of the present condition of mankind was neither dyspeptic, nor in the main metaphysical. His ceaseless endeavours to find an explanation for the degeneration of civilized man in philosophy, in history, and in natural science, are a proof of his invincible faith in the inner strength of mankind, and of his religious hope for the future before him. Herein we see Wagner's poetic nature; the affirmation of the will, the belief in the forming power of his own work are the foundations of the true artist's nature. Absolute negation and art are incompatible. The Hindoos, for instance, with their pre-eminent metaphysical gift, expressly taught that Redemption is not a thing to be endeavoured after,[1] and they remained without a trace of art. Artistic creation itself presupposes an optimistic temperament, an inexhaustible force of will, of faith, of hope. The artistic seer cannot rest satisfied with declaring the world bad; in his own breast there dwells a witness that it is beautiful; but the beauty cannot come into being without the world. The philosopher requires no one but himself; other men are a burden to him, and he retires into the shade of the primeval forest; the artist on the contrary is dependent upon other men as an element of his life; he can do everything, but nothing without their help. Hence Wagner's conviction that "man cannot be redeemed singly"; hence too his endeavours from 1848 until his death—notwithstanding the quieting influence of Schopenhauer—to seek for the *causes* of the decadence of mankind. It is interesting to follow the progressive deepening of his views in this respect.

Money and property.

In his very first utterance on the subject, in his speech in the *Vaterlandsverein*,

almighty being. Let us not forget that to culture alone is due our power of so enjoying as mankind in the highest fulness of its being can enjoy" (U., 71). It is quite wrong to mix up the German and the French idea of regeneration, as is often done. In France Pascal had exclaimed long before Rousseau: "Abêtissez-vous!" and in our own time Jules Laforgue had demanded: "La mise en jachère de l'intelligence humaine." Even if we understand Rousseau to mean by the word "nature," not as the foolish always suppose, the raw state of nature, but a spiritual ideal (as Kant remarked long ago, and as Heinrich von Stein has shown conclusively), still a hostile attitude towards art is characteristic of the French school. Schiller on the other hand considers that only through art can man return to Nature, and Wagner's hopes for regeneration spring from his faith in the measureless power of an ideal art. (*Cf.* too the section on "the Bayreuth idea").

[1] *Cf.* Saṅkara's Commentary on the Vedânta Sûtras, i. 1, 4 (*Sacred Books of the East*, edited by Professor Max Müller, vol. xxxiv. p. 23).

Wagner says: "We have to look the question firmly and boldly in the face, and ask ourselves what is the cause of all this misery in our present social conditions?" The answer which he gave to this momentous question has been stated in the section on politics[1]; the source of the misery was money. This first attempt of Wagner to arrive at the cause of our degenerate social conditions has been described as remarkably naïve, and consequently unworthy of the attention of serious men. Others will perhaps judge differently. Wagner had deeper views, even at that time. For the purposes of a popular speech he was contented to conjure up the spectre of the "pale metal, whose subjects we are in bodily servitude," but he knew that beneath the mysterious might of that "most rigid, most inert of Nature's products" there lay the conception of *property*. In his essay, *die Wibelungen*, written in the same summer, 1848, Wagner expresses the opinion that inherited property is the main cause of the decadence of the human race. "In the historical institution known as the feudal system, so long as it preserved its early purity, we see the heroic principle of human nature very clearly expressed. An enjoyment was bestowed upon one man, present in person, whose claim rested upon some deed, some important service which he rendered. From the moment when a feu became heritable, the man himself, his deeds and actions lost their value; this passed over to the property; his successors held their position from the property which they had not inherited by their own merits, and the ever lower depreciation of mankind which followed in consequence, together with the increasing appreciation of property, were at last embodied in the most un-human institutions. . . . Property came to confer upon men the rights which heretofore men had conferred upon property" (ii. 197). To this conviction Wagner remained true to the end of his life. In *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* he points to the principal care of the State in modern times, the endeavour to secure property immovably to all eternity, as the one thing which bars the way to independent life in the future (iii. 203). In *Oper und Drama* he says: "In this possession, now become property, which strangely enough is regarded as the foundation of good order, originate all the crimes in myth and in history" (iv. 82). In one of his very last works, *Erkenne dich selbst* (1881), he touches once more upon the same theme: "It would seem that the adoption by the State of the conception of property, in itself apparently so simple, has driven a stake through the body of humanity, by which it must sicken and painfully languish away" (x. 342).

Deterioration of the blood.

So acute a thinker as Wagner could not long continue to overlook the fact that such institutions as money and heritable property are at best only "causes of the second order," or perhaps rather *symptoms* than causes of decadence. Wagner looked deeper. He sought for *physical* causes, and thought to find them in the deterioration of the blood. He then asked how the fact was to be explained that the peoples of Europe were not only undergoing ever-increasing degeneration, but were drifting further and further from their own nature, and

[1] See p. 141.

that especially the German races appeared quite estranged from themselves. The explanation which presented itself to him was: *the moral influence of Judaism.*

Deterioration of the blood, and the demoralizing influence of the Jews: these then were, according to Wagner, the fundamental causes of our decadence. First in order comes the deterioration of the blood; but the influence of Judaism enormously hastens the process of progressive degeneration, and is especially mischievous from the fact that it hurries men round in a restless whirlwind of movement, leaving them no time for reflection, or for realizing their wretched fallen condition, and the loss of their own nature. The deterioration of the blood is caused especially by the food which we eat, but also by the admixture of inferior races with the nobler ones.

Influence of food.

How early the question of food began to occupy Wagner's mind is shown by his letter to Uhlig of October 20th, 1850, some words of which I have already quoted: "On the one hand, lack of wholesome nourishment, on the other, excess of wanton enjoyment, and above all a general mode of life entirely foreign to our nature, have reduced us to a state of degeneration, which can only be checked by the complete renovation of the crippled organism. Excess and privation are the destroying enemies of the human race at the present day" (U., 70). In his correspondence with Liszt too, Wagner devotes some earnest words to this question: "Truly all our politics, diplomacy, ambition, feebleness, science—unfortunately too all our modern art . . . all these parasitic growths upon our life have no other soil upon which they flourish than our ruined stomachs! Ah! would and could everyone understand me to whom I speak these words, which—almost ridiculous as they sound—are so terribly true!" (L., i. 153). It is of interest to note that Wagner's own physical sufferings and experiences contributed more than anything else to direct his attention to this important question. But nowhere have I found any reference to Feuerbach, though one might have been expected here, since the movement in this direction at the beginning of the fifties was partly set going by Feuerbach, and reflected in him, as is proved by his celebrated aphorism—half jest though it was—"Der Mensch ist was er isst" (*Homo est quod est*); it was taken up vigorously and "sensationally" by physiologists (Liebig, Moleschott, etc.) and by historians (Buckle). Considerations of natural history therefore, not of philosophy, first led Wagner to engage in his enquiry into the effects of nourishment. Numerous passages in his correspondence testify to this. Where special knowledge was lacking, Herwegh was his guide. It is often supposed that Wagner despised natural history; this is not the case. One passage in *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* proves the absurdity of this notion. Wagner there writes: "Modern natural science and landscape painting are the achievements of the present day, they alone afford comfort, they alone save us from infatuation and from incompetence in respect to science and to art" (iii. 173). And in a letter to Roeckel of the year 1854, Wagner clears up the misunderstandings prevalent even at that time, by showing that he only treats science coldly when it tries to take the place of

real life (R., 45). Here it is especially important that we should understand this positive relation of Wagner to science. In *Religion und Kunst*, and in other works of his latest years on regeneration, he defined his view thus: "the degeneration of the human race has been brought about by its having forsaken its natural nourishment" (x. 311); man's natural nourishment is vegetable food (x. 306). Such ideas were generally regarded as the phantasms of an artist on the verge of old age, whose mind was weakened and led astray by pessimist doctrines and its own mystic visions, whereas they were really the result of thirty years of minute study and thought. Wagner's deduction of the moral from the physical degeneration also shows how strictly and scientifically historical was the whole course of his thought. "The beast of prey cannot prosper, and so too we see the prevailing man of prey deteriorate. In consequence of his unnatural food he is subject to diseases peculiar to himself, and never again attains either his proper age or a peaceful death; tormented by cares and sufferings, bodily as well as mental, and known to him alone, he passes through an inane life to a close which he cannot but fear" (x. 307). As regards the special teachings of history, Wagner says they show man to be "a beast of prey in steady process of development. He conquers lands; subjugates the fruit-eating races; by the conquest of former conquerors he founds large empires, forms states and develops civilization that he may enjoy his plunder in peace. . . . Attack and defence, disaster and battle; victory and defeat; authority and servitude, the whole sealed with blood—this is all that the history of the human races has to tell about; the immediate consequence of the victory of the stronger is enervation, due to the civilization sustained by the labour of the conquered; then extinction of the degenerate by new and coarser powers, whose thirst for blood is yet unsatisfied" (x. 291-293). And herein little is altered "by the *tearing* beast of prey having been in great part transformed into a *calculating* beast of prey" (x. 263-344).

I will not detain the reader with a discussion of Wagner's hypothetical explanation of the geognostic processes which converted the plant-eating man into a meat-eating murderer of animals. Here indeed the "phantasms" predominate; the influence of Gleïzès, the author of *Thalysia*, the leading work on vegetarianism, is unmistakable, and the contrast between the thoughts of the great master's own genius, and the hasty and rather grotesque application of the teachings of natural history by the amiable Frenchman, is somewhat painful. It matters little whether we subscribe to Wagner's view or not; the most important argument which he brings against the eating of meat as the main cause of the deterioration of our blood is his own conviction.[1]

Inequality of the races.

Only in his last work on regeneration, *Heldenthum und Christenthum*, does Wagner discuss the inequality of the human races, and find a second physical cause of the decadence in the circumstance "that the nobler race may indeed

[1] Further on, when I come to speak of the positive proposals for regeneration, I shall return to the question of food and to the "phantasm," as Wagner called it himself.

rule over the inferior ones, but can never raise them to its own height by mingling with them; it will only be itself degraded. . . . It has been made very clear that we should have no history of mankind if there had been no movements, successes, creations of the white race, and the history of the world may fairly be regarded as the outcome of the mixture of the white race with the various branches of the yellow and black races; these lower races however only take part in history in so far as they are modified by the mixture, and come to resemble the white ones. The deterioration of the white races is due to the fact that, being much less numerous than the lower races, they are forced to mix with them, whereby, as has already been remarked, they themselves have suffered more by the loss of their purity than the others have gained by the improvement of their blood" (x. 352-3). These views Wagner borrowed from his friend Comte de Gobineau, the author of the *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*. Notwithstanding their immense range, they are of secondary importance for the doctrine of regeneration proper, inasmuch as they throw light only on the past, not upon the future. At least they can only regard the future in the entry of a necessary and terrible cataclysm. But Wagner rejects this deduction from the doctrine, and looks upon the true Christian religion as an antidote "provided to cleanse the blood of the human race from all impurities" (x. 360).

Influence of Judaism.

One other race question occupied Wagner's attention from an early time: the demoralizing influence of one of these white races on the others, of Judaism upon non-Jewish peoples.

Wagner's *Judenthum in der Musik* first appeared in 1850 in Brendel's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik;* it was published as a pamphlet, and with a detailed preface in 1869. Perhaps no work of the *Meister* is so well known, at least by name; the expression "author of *das Judenthum in der Musik*" is one of the most favourite periphrases for "Richard Wagner." But it is a mistake to suppose that Wagner's views on the influence of Judaism are all expressed in this one work, and it is this mistake which has lent countenance to the ridiculous accusation that he had mainly the success of Jewish musicians in his mind. Art was of course the subject with which Wagner was most directly concerned, but it was not at all the only one by which the influence of Judaism upon the morality of the nation was considered. In *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* he speaks of this influence in detail—though *sous entendu*[1]—as estranging the German from himself. His most important utterances on the subject, however, are scattered amongst the entire group of his last writings on regeneration, two of which are entirely devoted to this question: *Modern* and *Erkenne dich Selbst* ("Know thyself"). Especially the last work is important; in twelve pages "the inevitable disadvantage in which the German race stands to the Jewish" is exhaustively treated. Whoever therefore is earnestly concerned to know accurately Wagner's views about "the plastic dæmon of mankind's decadence" should study this little work.

[1] Because the essay originally appeared in the form of articles in a great liberal political newspaper.

In view of the fact that Wagner, notwithstanding his repeated detailed and luminous discussions, has almost always been misunderstood—intentionally and unintentionally—it would be a bold act on the part of any other individual to attempt to condense Wagner's views on Judaism into a few lines. In the excited state of the public at the present time, it is almost impossible to speak frankly and impersonally upon the subject. I will therefore confine myself to giving a few hints which may assist an unbiassed person to form a judgment for himself. The so-called "Jewish question" is often supposed to be one of recent times, but quite wrongly; quite recent however is the phase which the question has assumed; formerly it was unreservedly discussed, but now people's minds have become so sensitive that it is almost proscribed. Formerly there was, on both sides, more sincerity and less violence. We do not require to go back to the *sceleratissima gens* of Seneca, nor even to Goethe and Beethoven; it is sufficient to remark that in the forties, when Wagner first entered upon public life, all who were not Jews were Anti-semites, from the communistic democrat to the ultra-conservative. Herwegh, the Socialist, complains of the friendship which the Jews show him; it insults him. Dingelstedt, the proclaimer of German freedom, writes:

"Wohin Ihr fasst, Ihr werdet Juden fassen,
Allüberall das Lieblingsvolk des Herrn!
Geht, sperrt sie wieder in die alten Gassen,
Eh' sie Euch in ein Christenviertel sperr'n!"[1]

In the Prussian *Landtag*, in 1847, Freiherr v. Thadden-Trieglaff literally demanded "the emancipation of the Christians from the Jews," and Herr v. Bismarck-Schönhausen expressed himself similarly![2] Nor was it in Germany alone that the ablest minds regarded the admixture of a foreign element of such a peculiar kind in the public life of Europe as likely to be attended with very serious consequences. In that same year, 1847, there appeared in France the prophetic work of Toussenel: *Les Juifs rois de l'époque.* The way in which Ludwig Feuerbach is glorified by those very Jews is most significant, after he had again and again written about them in a way which at the present day would have assured his literary death: "The principle of the Jewish religion is egoism. The Jew is indifferent to everything which does not directly refer to his own well-being. Hebrew Egoism is immeasurably deep and powerful. The Jews received by the grace of Jehovah the command to steal," etc. (1841, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*). Since then a great change has taken place. The Christians have grown more tolerant, the Jews more intolerant. To lay the

[1] "Wherever you seek you will find Jews,
Everywhere the chosen people of the Lord,
Go, lock them up again in their old ghettos
Before they lock you in a Christian's quarter!"

[2] *Cf.* Treitschke *Deutsche Geschichte im xix. Jahrh.*, v. 634. This was Bismarck's first speech in parliament.

blame of a tendency which belongs to a whole epoch upon a single man is to defy all historical justice.[1]

It follows from what we have said that it was not from caprice that Wagner raised his warning voice against the increasing influence of the Jews on German art. The best men of his time, of every party, thought as he did. But it is worthy of note that whilst the Jews bore no malice against the others on account of their anti-semitic views, they never forgave Wagner! *Das Judenthum in der Musik* appearing in the columns of a professional paper with a limited circulation would have remained quite unnoticed, if the Jews themselves, with that faultless instinct which Wagner speaks of as theirs (x. 347), had not felt the extraordinary importance of this little essay. In the entire European press a war was commenced against Wagner, of the immoderate violence of which I have already spoken in my first chapter; it continued until his death.[2] Nothing could be better suited to bring Wagner's attitude to Judaism into notice than this action of the Jews; we cannot help thinking that he had hit the nail upon the head.

The following considerations must however be noted. The malicious literary warfare against Wagner had begun in Dresden, long before the appearance of his *Judenthum in der Musik*. The Jews themselves, with their acute perceptive faculties, were almost everywhere amongst the first to recognise Wagner's extraordinary importance as an artist; moreover, among the critics who achieved reputation by their stupid vilification of the great master were many who were not Jews. An instinctive antipathy to Wagner's *art* on the part of the Jews cannot therefore be assumed. Moreover Wagner never avoided the society and friendship of Jews; if we go to the bottom of the matter we shall find that the agitation against Wagner was carried on exclusively by the worse elements of Judaism proper, and that it was really nothing more than a conspiracy of mediocrity and incapacity of every confession against genius. It deserves our unmitigated contempt.

But when we pass from the consideration of these historical events to that of Wagner's own utterances, two things will occur to us: their absolute integrity, and their high human significance. Like his hero Siegfried, Wagner was free from envy.

The aptitude of the Jew for amassing money is usually the principal reproach made against him. Wagner however merely defended German taste

[1] For a whole generation after this the Germans seem to have been struck with blindness, or they could never have considered men clever who said like Gustav Freytag: "We do not regard the present time as favourable for a serious attack upon Judaism in any quarter, in politics or in society, or in science and art (controversy on *das Judenthum in der Musik; Grenzboten*, 1869, No. 22). The difference between Freytag and Wagner is that between talent and genius; had people at that time listened to the warning and peace-making voice of genius, it would never have come to the malignant and dangerous conflict which we see now.

[2] On the republication of *das Judenthum* (1869) there appeared more than one hundred and seventy rejoinders!

in art and German notions of morality against a race which felt differently on these points. Nowhere does he speak of any economic interests, and nowhere is the discussion of principles tainted with personal malice. In order to defend his thesis in *Judenthum in der Musik* he was of course obliged to speak of Israelite musicians, and chose the most venerated names for this purpose; we may note the honourable manner in which he names Meyerbeer, with what respect and appreciation he speaks of Mendelssohn, and compare these with the low attacks and abuse to which he was himself subjected in this connection. We may well believe that Wagner lost none of his faithful "truly sympathetic" (viii. 300) Israelite friends, and that he reckoned confidently on gaining new friends amongst the Jews themselves. With him it is not a passing question of the day, but "a thought of historical importance, affecting the culture of humanity at large" (viii. 322). At the beginning of his *Judenthum in der Musik* Wagner tells us that his purpose is: "to explain the unconscious feeling which in the people takes the form of a deep-rooted antipathy to the Jewish nature; to express therefore in plain language something really existing, not at all by force of imagination to infuse life into a thing unreal in itself" (v. 85). And how was this really existing thing to be removed? How was the baneful yawning abyss to be bridged over? Wagner points to the regeneration of the human race, and to the Jews he says: "Bear your share undauntedly in this work of redemption, gaining new birth by self-immolation; we shall then be one and undivided! but remember that there can only be one release from the curse which rests upon you: the release of Ahasuerus—destruction." What he means by destruction is evident from an earlier sentence: "to become men *in common* with us is for the Jews primarily the same thing as to cease to be Jews" (v. 108).[1]

We find the same direct plain speaking later on: "One thing is clear to me; as the influence which the Jews exert upon our intellectual life, and which shows itself by distorting and falsifying the highest tendencies of our culture, is not a mere accident, due perhaps to physiological causes, it must be acknowledged as undeniable and decisive. . . . If this element is to be assimilated in us, to mature with us and coöperate in the higher development of the nobler part of our human capacities, then it is clear that the right way to help on the process of assimilation is, not to hide the difficulties, but to display them fairly to view" (viii. 322).

What Wagner believes himself justified in asserting of the Jews, namely,

[1] It is amusing to learn that the Herren Joachim, Moscheles, Hauptmann, David, etc., felt themselves so deeply injured by this invitation "to become men in common with us" that they demanded the immediate dismissal of the Editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Franz Brendel, from the staff of teachers in the Leipzig *Konservatorium!* Wagner's proposal reminds us—except that it is much milder—of Luther's, that the Jews should cease to be Jews; "if they will not, we will not endure or suffer them with us." Of Wagner's *Judenthum in der Musik* Ludwig Nohl has said very finely, "it was like the awakening conscience of the nation, except that the dull minds of men failed to comprehend the new profound spirit of reconciliation which here appeared to heal and to save.

that they live on "the plunder of the general decadence" (x. 298), is, after all, nothing more than what their own prophet Micah foretold of them: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces." *Lion* is, perhaps, a tropical exaggeration; *sheep*, certainly, is not. After Micah came a greater prophet, who cried to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." He taught the Jews what Wagner now says to them, "In order to be men in common with us, cease to be Jews!"

The belief in regeneration.

We have seen that Wagner regards the present condition of culture and civilization as a condition of decadence. We have also seen that he believed himself to have discovered the most important causes of this decadence. It now remains for us to adduce something about his positive thoughts, and his proposals for regeneration.

Regarding the recognition of a state of decadence, Wagner says: "It is not new, for every great mind has been led by it; ask the truly great poets of all times; ask the founders of truthful religions." He rejects, however, the pessimist inferences which were drawn from this by the Hindu and Christian religions, and by metaphysics, and says: "the recognition of the cause of our decadence leads us on to the possibility of regeneration, which must be no less thorough" (x. 326). And in truth the argument is so simple and logical, that if we admit the two premises we cannot but admit the conclusion. My present task would accordingly be very simple; if animal food is the principal cause of the decadence of mankind, the remedy clearly is to confine ourselves strictly to a vegetable diet; if the commingling of races brings about deterioration of the blood, we must see that it does not take place, etc. I might, therefore, now close this chapter on Wagner's doctrine of regeneration. But here Wagner's many-sided intellect forces us on; the difficulty of reducing a world-philosophy which has drawn its life from the most various and widely-distributed channels to a few simple sentences is very great. Once more we become conscious of the enormous difference between the philosopher, whose endeavour is, and must be, to simplify everything in accordance with the organic laws of reason, to bring his entire cognition as nearly as possible into a single proposition, and the artist, to whom observation is the *prima lex*, and who pays little more regard to the rigid laws of mechanical thought than does Nature herself. Wagner indeed recommends vegetarianism, but herewith the question is by no means disposed of for him. His philosophic insight is so deep that he always recognizes the connection of mankind with Nature, and natural necessity as the only efficient force, and hereby a pessimistic side-light is thrown on every artificial attempt at regeneration. And again, his emotional life, his best powers, belong to that art which

he found to be "completely one with true religion" (x. 322). Neither material nor metaphysical attempts at amendment can of themselves lead to regeneration; on the contrary, "all genuine impulse and all really efficient strength to carry out the great regeneration can only spring from the deep soil of true religion" (x. 313).

The three doctrines.

It is as if three worlds existed side by side: a material or empirical, a transcendent or metaphysical, and a mystic or religious world; art is the bond of connection between them all; its form is material, its substance transcendent, its interpretation mystic; for this reason all three worlds are reflected in the mind of the artistic genius himself with remarkable clearness. But if the artist has observed something, and wishes, not to represent it in a work of art, but, as here with the doctrine of regeneration, to develop and communicate it to the intellect, he will assume three different sets of hypotheses, without troubling himself much about their agreement together; their unity is quite evident to him through his own personality, and he can communicate it directly to others in a work of art. It follows that anyone who wishes to represent Wagner's views in a simple comprehensive form, is at once met by great difficulties; for their real and complete understanding the definite impression of his art-works is a necessary foundation; this imparts to our whole being—to use a simile from science—an increased faculty of vibration, and enables us to become good "conductors" for the most complex combinations of thought, which before we viewed with blank bewilderment. Not Wagner alone, but every genius in art is in the same case; Goethe too would appear like a chameleon, or like a living kaleidoscope, were it not for his mighty individuality showing itself harmoniously in his art. It will help us to a conscious and logical apprehension of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration if our minds are quite clear on this point. First we must separate the three points of view: the material, the metaphysical, and the religious.

The empirical doctrine of regeneration.

About the material, or empiric and realistic point of view not much remains for me to say. The principal thing is here, according to Wagner, the food; we must abstain from meat and from alcoholic drinks.

This extreme view Wagner only adopted late in his life. At an earlier date he had said "the right thing is for us to enjoy everything, but with suitable moderation"; he even writes: "the simple substances of nutrition are not for people like ourselves; we need more complicated food, substances which contain the most nourishment whilst making the smallest demand upon the digestion" (U., 232-239). But after he had become convinced that the adoption of a vegetable diet was "the key-stone of regeneration" (x. 307), he was not to be put out by any considerations. He admits that in Northern climates possibly a meat diet may be necessary; if so, then we, the nobler races, should undertake "a migration, rationally organized" into other parts of the world (x. 311).[1]

[1] This proposal for a national emigration will no doubt appear in the highest degree extravagant. A man of empirical science, the well-known French physiologist, psychologist, and political economist,

Wagner indeed expressly calls this, as well as many others of his proposals in the domain of material and practical life, "Phantasms of an attempt at regeneration" (x. 312). This must be remembered, particularly by those with whom the mere thought of vegetarianism calls forth a supercilious smile. In view of the great progress which vegetarianism has made amongst the practical Anglo-Saxons and Americans, and of the extraordinary physical achievements of strict vegetarians latterly at public competitions, those of the opposite opinion might well learn to regard the question objectively. Experimental Science has yet produced no proof on either side, and even if it did, the proof would be of only limited value, because the question really rests upon a moral basis, and has more particularly to do with man's relation to animals (*cf.* Wagner's letter to E. von Weber).

Only one thing I would again draw attention to, namely, that Wagner's *theories* of vegetable diet are a much weaker argument than his own conviction. About the "phantasms" of his natural science I have already spoken.[1] The historical evidence is equally unsatisfactory. Wagner speaks of a pre-historic man who lived on vegetable food; but at the extreme limit of pre-historic man we always find flesh-eaters.[2] The appeal to the Hindus is also unfortunate, for the Vedic Hindus were meat-eaters; their bill of fare was not unlike our own; ox, goat, sheep, game, birds, fish, sometimes, too, it is said horseflesh (Oldenberg *Religion des Veda*, 355). Even at later times there has never been any real prohibition against the eating of meat, and we must not overlook the fact that the Brahmans themselves, the thinkers and intellectual leaders of the people, ate the sacrificial flesh—that is, the best. An old Indian proverb says: "Meal is ten times better than rice, milk ten times better than meal, flesh eight times better than milk."[3] The sages who retired into the forest in their old age never made their own abstemious diet into a general rule of conduct. Flesh-eating is therefore, certainly in India, the older custom; vegetarianism is a later institution. Buddha himself, if the account of his own disciples may be believed, died of indigestion, brought on by the excessive enjoyment of pork. With the Aryans of Persia vegetarianism finds just as little support: "Of two men, he who fills himself with meat is filled with the good spirit much more than he who does not do so; the latter is all but dead; the former is above him by the worth

Alfred Fouillée, in his recent work (July 1895), *Le tempérament et le caractère selon les individus, les sexes et les races*, makes exactly the same proposal, the only chance of saving the Indo-Germanic race; the possibility of carrying this thought into execution is, according to Fouillée, guaranteed by the latest discoveries in medicine.

[1] In a problem of such extreme complexity natural science will find arguments both for and against, *ad libitum*. The Dinosauria for example seem to have carried out the experiment on a grand scale; in the flesh-eating genera, the fine proportions and the development of the head are remarkable; the vegetable eaters on the other hand attain the most colossal dimensions (Brontosaurus, for instance, sixty feet long), but the head remains comparatively undeveloped.

[2] *Cf.* Johann Ranke, *Der Mensch*, vol. ii.

[3] Böhtlingk, *Indische Sprüche*, 363.

of a sheep, by the worth of an ox, by the worth of a man" (*Sacred Books of the East*, iv. 46). This is the Zend-Avesta. That Pythagoras taught vegetarianism, as Wagner asserts, has never been proved; his strict prohibition of beans as food would seem to point to something very different. And finally Gleïzès' interpretation of the words of Christ at the Last Supper: "This do in remembrance of me," by an interpolation of the word "only"—"this *only* eat" (namely bread and wine) would probably not be allowed to pass uncontradicted.

These remarks are not brought as criticism, but in order to indicate a striking characteristic of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration, namely that just in the empiric or material portion the "phantasms" everywhere predominate. And it might easily happen that too concrete a conception of things which are valuable only as arguments, as pictures, would give quite a wrong impression of the truth which lies at the bottom of them, but which neither history nor experiment can prove. In the last section but one I remarked that it was one of the most essential merits of the German struggle for regeneration that neither in its deductions nor in its visions of the future did it follow the abstract, logical method of Rousseau. The inner necessity, the *need* (as Wagner says) is acknowledged as law-giver, the outer perception frankly admitted to be a phantasm.

The philosophical doctrine of regeneration.

The philosophical treatment of the idea of regeneration is freer. "Nature, and Nature alone, can bring order into the great world-destiny. Civilization, starting from the Christian belief in the depravity of human nature, has repudiated mankind, and thereby made an enemy which will necessarily destroy it, just in so far as man has no room in it; for this enemy is nothing else than Nature itself which alone lives eternally" (*Kunst und Revolution*, iii. 37-38). The same thought, but in more lucid form, was expressed by Wagner a few days before his death, in his letter to Heinrich von Stein of January 31st, 1883: "We cannot begin far enough away from the consummation hitherto achieved, if we wish to find the purely human in harmonious agreement with the eternally natural" (x. 416). Evidently such reflections are not empirical. The "purely human" and the "eternally natural" are perhaps not abstractions; but at least we must admit that these conceptions have not been gathered from observation. In the next section we shall learn the radical signification of this conception of the purely human for Wagner's art. For the doctrine of regeneration its value lies, first in the fact that Wagner adhered to this phrase and this idea throughout his whole life, and secondly that the "purely human"—which is merely a part of the wider conception, "the eternally natural"—forms the optimistic element in Wagner's philosophical conviction of the possibility of regeneration.

From the passages quoted (which could be multiplied indefinitely), it is perfectly evident that Nature, and more especially true "human nature," is regarded as good. Wagner calls our world "the wilderness of a blighted Paradise" (ix. 151). In one of his earliest writings he laments over "the shattered faith in the purity of human nature" (iii. 47), and in one of his

latest he says "we look for salvation only in the awakening of man to his simple and holy dignity" (x. 350). The true pessimist teaches: "far truer than the Pantheistic identification of Nature with God, would be its identification with the Devil," and of Mankind he says: "man is at bottom a wild, a shocking animal. We know him only in his tame state, bound, in what is called civilization, and are terrified at the occasional outbreaks of his nature. But if ever the lock and chain of legal order are loosened, and anarchy begins, he shows what he is" (Schopenhauer). This belief, firm as a rock, in the purity and holiness of human nature, is therefore the philosophical foundation of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration.

Another conception too we find with Wagner from the very first, one which has a pessimistic tinge, and holds the balance against the first. It is the conception of *necessity*.

In the section on philosophy I have already pointed to the stress laid upon "spontaneous necessity" in Wagner's earlier writings, as having a strong savour of Schopenhauer.[1] Wagner himself regarded what he before called "spontaneity" (*Unwillkür*) as so entirely identical with Schopenhauer's *Will*, that in later editions he did not consider it worth while to revise the text and correct it; he only calls attention to the identity of the two conceptions once for all in the preface (iii. 4). This conception of necessity, like Schopenhauer's Will, embraces the whole range of the phenomenal world: "Nature creates and fashions of necessity" (iii. 54); and with mankind "necessity alone determines us to real creative deeds" (v. 53); "without necessity nothing genuine and true can be commenced" (x. 179). Quite logically it follows from this that "life is the proximate, the self-determined"; science "the unconscious justified . . . the destruction of the arbitrary in the Will of the necessary" (iii. 57).

A little consideration will show that such a conception of Nature leaves no place for regeneration. Nature has fashioned everything of necessity; the wisdom of the wise is therefore "willing of the necessary." Still more clear does the matter become directly his perception attains compact form through Schopenhauer's metaphysics. With Schopenhauer there can be no talk of regeneration, if only for the reason that the conception of decadence would have no meaning in his system, and never occurs with him. The attempt to demonstrate progress he indeed dismisses as "an artificial and imaginary construction"; but just as little does he admit decadence; the teaching of history is for him, "that we still have the same, equal and *unalterable* being before us, doing exactly the same things to-day as it did yesterday, and will do to all eternity" (*Ges. Werke*, iii. 507). Schopenhauer indeed speaks approvingly of the story of the Fall, but only *as a myth;* existence is in itself sin. According to him the wise man can at most desire one thing; with Wagner's Wotan: "*Das Ende! das Ende!*" Wagner, who was thoroughly at home in Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and accepted it unreservedly, undertook with the

[1] See p. 152.

greatest boldness a similar rôle with regard to this philosophy as that which Schopenhauer assumed towards Kant; he carried on Schopenhauer's thought! He expressly says: "from Schopenhauer's own demonstrations of the depravity of the world I obtained the first incentive to my meditations on a possible redemption of this same world" (x. 48). He says, "the inversion of the misguided will, the ways to which are clearly indicated by Schopenhauer alone, and which may indeed lead to hope, have been pointed out plainly and definitely, and in a sense conforming to the most exalted religions, by our philosopher; it is not his fault if the correct representation of the world, as it lay before him, so entirely engaged his attention that he had to leave it to ourselves to find out the paths and to follow them; for we can only enter them upon our own feet" (x. 330). Wagner, in fact, recommends Schopenhauer's philosophy as the only one which will lead us "to set out independently on the paths of true hope."[1] That, certainly, is a most surprising turn, and one which would have surprised nobody more than the man who described hope as "the foolishness of the heart," but this proves nothing, for Kant would have been just as little likely to acknowledge Schopenhauer as his continuer. Schopenhauer may be said to have taken a *salto mortale* from Kant's Critical Idealism, to find *das Ding an sich* in the Will. Wagner made a leap which was no less bold. His unerring judgment soon recognized that the negation of the Will for life, whatever its motives might be, "must always appear as the highest energy of the will itself" (x. 356); from this footing he attained the conviction that whoever recognizes the decadence with clear insight, and at the same time possesses this highest energy of the will, holds in his hand all that is required for regeneration; he knows the evil and is master of the remedy. Out of this springs his "faith in the possibility of regeneration," his fervent belief in the "All-might of the Will" (ix. 91), and herein is the explanation of the strange words, "the Will's assurance of victory is achieved by the recognition of the decadence" (x. 320).

Of course, all this is valuable only as an indication; more cannot with justice be expected within the limits of a general account. This curious organic relation between Schopenhauer's pessimism and Wagner's optimist doctrine of regeneration—the doctrine that out of the inner negation of the world the affirmation of redemption will be born (x. 282)—constitutes in my opinion the most interesting and most important part of Wagner's philosophical thought.

It is true that one who remained content with the philosophical statement of the doctrine of regeneration could hardly gain a clear and satisfactory view of it. For the roots from which Wagner's conviction springs go much deeper; at bottom the doctrine is religious.

The religious doctrine of regeneration.

The basis of Wagner's religious belief is the conviction of a moral significance of the world, exalted far above all doubt. He says: "*the recognition of the moral significance of the world is the crowning point of all knowledge*" (x. 333). This conviction too is the foundation of hope, and herewith of the belief in

[1] See the facsimile given in the last section, p. 161.

regeneration. In 1853 he writes: "I possess faith in a future of mankind, and draw it simply from my necessity" (L., i. 236). But belief from inner necessity is religion, and this sentence, penned in the earlier part of his life, helps us rightly to understand the later one: "Only from the deep soil of a truthful religion can the inducement and the strength proceed, which are necessary for carrying through the regeneration" (x. 313). So that without religion we can neither possess strength to carry out the regeneration, nor indeed feel any impulse thereto. Religion is consequently the indispensable condition of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration.

Here another consideration forces itself on our notice. Between religion and regeneration there exists a parallelism, resting, not upon external features, but upon real kinship.

"The deep foundation of every true religion," Wagner writes, "lies in the infirmity of the world and the consequent inducements which we have to free ourselves therefrom" (x. 276). This religious perception of the infirmity of the world is reflected in history as decadence. But religion includes an affirmation as well as a negation, regeneration as well as decadence: the belief in redemption. In consequence of this relationship we must regard the idea of regeneration as proceeding from the deepest foundations of religion. Faith here becomes a *deed*. That which commonly presents itself to men's minds in their rare moments of devotional meditation, the sinfulness of their being, and the desire for redemption, is henceforth to be the positive impulse of their lives. As it is said in *Parsifal:*

Bekenntniss
wird Schuld und Reue enden,
Erkenntniss
in Sinn die Thorheit Wenden![1]

This *Bekenntniss* (confession of decadence) and this *Erkenntniss* (recognition of the possibility of regeneration) will therefore, as we have said, in future be something more than mere subjects of pious meditation, or a bond of connection with a hereafter too remote to exert any determining influence upon the things of this world. Wagner says to us: "Provide a real fertile soil for these ideals in your habits of life, and a new power will proceed from them" (x. 179). And in the practical confession of belief with which this section opens he says: "We believe in the possibility of regeneration, and devote ourselves thereto in every sense."

We are here involuntarily reminded of Feuerbach, of his inextinguishable faith in the future, and of his noble endeavours to breathe new life into religion by employing it to fertilize the existing soil of real life. I name Feuerbach here in order to draw attention to the immense difference between all materialistic belief in the future and Wagner's religious optimism. The difference lies in Wagner's belief in destinies of the human race which lie "beyond all time and all space"

[1] Confession will end sin and repentance; knowledge will turn folly into wisdom.

(x. 352), in a "moral signification of the world." This is all that he cares for. His entire doctrine of regeneration is the application of this belief. With material progress it is in no way concerned. To the conception of progress it opposes that of the *harmony* of Nature—an antithesis exactly corresponding to that of Judaism and Brahmanism. Nowhere does he preach a "return to Nature"; but *the oneness of Man with Nature*, whereby the life of primitive man was unconsciously shaped, shall be raised to an acknowledged law. This thought is entirely in harmony with the teachings of natural science; nor is Wagner an enemy of science—that we have already seen; he praises mechanical science, for, says he, the machine is the artificial slave of free-creating man (iii. 41). But, on the other hand, neither by perfecting machines nor by amassing knowledge can we cause one tear less to fall in the ocean of human misery; such things are of temporary, relative, not of eternal, absolute importance. Wagner's idea of regeneration, on the other hand, only considers man as a moral being; to him it is "appalling and wonderful . . . that we wish to be hopeful without possessing a true morality" (x. 329). Nor is he at bottom concerned for the attainment of any temporal object; in one place he says mankind may perish if it only perishes divinely (x. 352). Here Schiller's words apply: "Reason knows no limits; to begin is to accomplish, and the journey is finished directly it is undertaken." But even when we believe the journey to be finished, when the regenerated life of the future has been reached, though we should indeed be freed from the common sufferings of sinful life, it would be by "a conscious impulse, in which the terrible problem of this world is always present" (x. 319). In no sense then is regeneration a substitute for religion (as it would be in Feuerbach's sense)—still less is it an antidote against religion (as others have supposed). The following passage from *Religion und Kunst* leaves no doubt about Wagner's meaning: "However peaceful the condition may be which results from the regeneration of the human race, by reason of an appeased conscience, the fearful tragedy of the world's existence will continually make itself felt, in Nature around us, in the violent conflicts of the elements, in the ceaseless lower manifestations of the Will beside and about us, in sea and desert—even in the insect, in the worm upon which we carelessly tread; and daily we shall look to the Saviour on the Cross as our last exalted refuge" (x. 317). Regeneration is thus a mere picture of true redemption, "that other world of redemption must therefore differ from this world, exactly as the kind of cognition which we need to apprehend it differs from that which only apprehends this illusive suffering world" (viii. 27).

Art as the uniting element.

I hope now to have made it clear how it is that Wagner's doctrine of regeneration takes three different forms, according to the three standpoints from which it may be regarded: the empiric and historical, the abstract philosophical, and the religious. Only one word remains to be said about the element in which all three worlds become conscious of their oneness, and which therefore plays such an important part in this conception; namely *art*.

In each of these three the influence of art is decisive.

Art and Life.

In his very first Zurich treatise, *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, Wagner ascribes a very high office to art: "It is the business of art to indicate to this social impulse (for free human dignity) its noblest significance; to direct it in the right path." It is however at the same time admitted that "the influence of art alone will indeed not be sufficient to enable men to develop human society to human beauty and nobility"; not only to Apollo, the god of art, must the future raise an altar, but also to "Jesus, who suffered for mankind" (iii. 40, 49, 50). Even here then, at a time when Wagner's idea of regeneration was as yet immature, and appeared to a certain extent distorted by the historical and political growth clinging to it, one thing is clearly recognised and expressed, that art, in the reformed human society for which we hope, will play the part of a *mediator*. It will reveal to men the *significance* of his unconscious impulse, and lead the erring into the right *path*. It does not exert any direct influence, such as that of ennobling the manners (as *Kaiser* Josef II. thought), but it possesses the magic power of showing man to himself, and herewith pointing out the way to regeneration.

Art and philosophy.

Almost at the same time Wagner recognized that "art represents the necessary," or, as the context explains, *natural* necessity (E., 23). Herewith too the relation of art to metaphysics is clearly defined. Art can never express a philosophic concept; the highest art is distinguished from ordinary artistic handicraft in its procedure being necessary, spontaneous (see E., 22, iii. 57, and R., 37); what it represents is the phenomena of the transcendent foundation of the world: natural necessity, "Will," or whatever else we like to call it. Art "liberates the unsensible thought in sensibility"; and for this reason it was that Schopenhauer valued art so very highly; from his philosophical standpoint he considered its final object to be: "To facilitate the cognition of the ideas of the world." Here too, therefore, according to Wagner's conviction, art has the important part of a mediator to play; it is a mediator for the attainment of a deeper cognition of the nature of the world; this cognition however is an indispensable constituent of the idea of regeneration.[1]

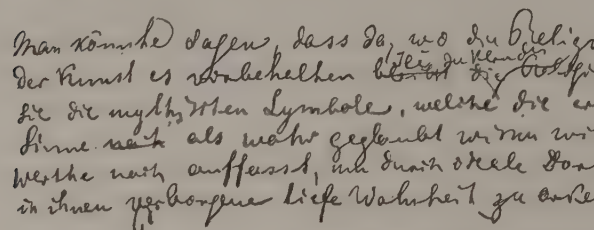
Art and religion.

In *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* we find the third decisive proposition: "Art is the living representative of religion" (iii. 77). Here again, then, with religion, art is the mediator; it represents; here, too, its office is to indicate "the noblest significance" and "the true path." "It will be well with us," he writes at a later date, "when we can, with the consciousness of a pure life-impulse, keep open our sense for that mediator of the overwhelmingly sublime; when the artist-poet of the world's tragedy leads us on to reconciliation with this human life. This poet-priest, the only one who has never lied, has always been the best friend and companion of mankind through his most terrible errors, and he will accompany us into our reborn life, to show us in ideal truth the symbol

[1] *Cf.* the following section, p. 192.

of all transitory things, when the realistic lies of the historian are long buried in the dust of old records" (x. 317).

We have already seen that "all genuine impulse and all strength" for regeneration "can spring only from the deep soil of a truthful religion"; for this reason, therefore, the most important relation of art is that to religion. For if art succeeds in raising itself from the very inferior position of a harmless entertainment and diversion to that of a "hallowed and purifying religious act," as Wagner requires (iii. 157, and x. 320), then we may understand "the significance which art may have, when completely freed from immoral demands, in a new order of things, and especially for the people" (x. 335). How great is the service which art, understood in this sense, has already performed, and is destined to perform in a still higher degree in the future, for true religion, Wagner tells us in one of the weightiest passages of his works, the opening words of *Religion und Kunst*.



Facsimile from the Original MS. (x. 275).[1]

The first concern of the priest is that religious allegories shall be regarded as actual truths; for this the artist cares nothing at all, for he frankly and openly offers his work as his own invention. But when religion feels the necessity of further developing its dogmatic symbols, that is for hiding the one true divine thing which it contains, by attaching to it things impossible, and recommending belief in them, its life is but artificial. Feeling this, religion has always sought the coöperation of art, which, however, remained incapable of higher development so long as it was employed to represent these symbols in their supposed reality, that is by producing idols, fetishes for visible adoration; "Art never fulfilled its true mission until, by ideal representation of the allegorical picture, it showed people the substance, the unspeakable divine truth contained therein" (x. 275).[2] Regarding the significance of art for human life, I shall have much

[1] "We might say that where religion becomes artificial, it is reserved for art to save its substance, by construing the mythic symbols which religion wishes shall be believed in a literal sense, as images, and by this ideal representation making manifest the deep truth which they contain."

[2] It is sufficiently important to notice that Wagner, thirty years earlier, when speaking of the Greek Tragedy, expressed this view that art was destined "to save the substance of religion," in almost exactly the same words: "The Tragedy was a religious celebration, become art; by the side of it the actual traditional religious service, still continued in the temples, necessarily lost so much of its fervency and truth that it became a thoughtless conventional ceremony, while its substance continued to live in the work of art" (*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 157).

to add in another place;[1] here we are concerned only with the doctrine of regeneration, and the important part which art plays here is that it "saves the substance of religion," that it "expresses what the philosophy of religion cannot express" (iv. 218), that in the decadence of religious dogmas "true, idealizing art comes to save" (x. 281), that it "preserves the noblest heritage of the Christian thought in its extra-worldly, reconstructing purity" (x. 288). Still, if we hope for regeneration, our hope must first be directed to the "recovery of a true religion" (x. 309); for art can not supply us with religion. What it certainly can do is to "point out the path"; it is able "to reveal the unspeakable beyond all conceptions of thought" (x. 321); it is fundamentally related to "that purest religion which is to spring from Christian revelation" (x. 288).

Wagner's religion.

That in thus repeatedly emphasizing religion none of the churches of the present day were in Wagner's mind is certain; the last quoted words suffice to prove this. In what sense he was Christian the reader will be able to judge from many of the passages here quoted. As far back as 1851 he retorts upon his Pharisaic detractors: "If I, in the desire to free myself from the depravity of the modern world, have been a Christian, I was at least a more honest Christian than those who with their insolent piety reproach me with falling away from Christianity" (iv. 371).[2] Later he wrote: "Henceforward our only concern will be to prepare a vigorous soil for the renewed culture of the *religion of sympathy* amongst us, in defiance of the disciples of lutiitarianism" (x. 260). "Perhaps the sage who helped us to look upwards in our decadence would be not seen but heard—as a sigh of deepest sympathy, such as was once heard from the Cross at Golgotha, now springing from our own soul" (x. 48). Wagner derives "the corruption of the Christian religion from the admission of Judaism in the construction of its dogmas" (x. 299). Our civilization is by no means Christian; on the contrary it is a "triumph of the enemies of the Christian faith" (x. 302), "a patch-work of Judaism and barbarism" (x. 343): and for that reason our religions are incapable of preparing the way for regeneration.[3]

What religion was in Wagner's mind we learn, not from his writings, but from his works of art, from *die Feen* to *Parsifal*. For if the coöperation of art is indispensable for the recovery of a truthful religion, no less is truthful art inconceivable, except as an emanation from religion. "Only upon the foundation of a truthful morality can the true æsthetic blossom of art spring forth" (x. 362); and therefore Wagner too says: "the new religion embraces in itself the conditions of the art-work" (iii. 146). In *Was nützt diese Erkenntniss* we read: "The highest art can never gain strength to reveal itself, unless it is at bottom the religious symbol of a perfect moral order of things, whereby alone

[1] *Cf.* the next section, and the second part of chapter iv.

[2] *Cf.* the passage from his letter of 1880, quoted at p. 133.

[3] *Cf.* Tolstoi's *Short Exposition of the Gospel*: "As I studied Christianity I found this spring of the purest water of life mingled with dirt and mud which obscured its clearness; by the side of the high Christian doctrine, and one with it, was a strange, misshapen Hebrew church doctrine."

it can become really comprehensible to the people" (x. 335). We see in what sense Wagner's art—and all highest art—may rightly be called *religious*.

Art and religion mutually condition each other; true art cannot come into life without religion; nor can religion reveal itself without the aid of art. In so far, too, religion and art form a single organism (x. 322). And this living product, a deeply religious art, serving to reveal a truthful religion, is the only thing out of which the desire and the ability to carry out the great regeneration can proceed. From this regeneration will spring: "The reborn, blessed, artistic mankind of the future (iii. 103)

Transition to the doctrine of art.

What then shall that art be like, that it may be worthy of so exalted an office? that it may point out the true path to him who struggles for free human dignity? that in it the inconceivable thought of the metaphysician may acquire visible embodiment? that it may give the living representation of religion? The reply to this question is contained in Wagner's art-doctrine, and especially his doctrine of the perfect *drama*, the art-work: where the "highest and deepest things which the human mind is capable of grasping shall be communicated in the most intelligible way."

Printed in Germany

Krausse pinx. Photogravure Bruckmann

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Richard Wagner's Art-doctrine

> "The arts are regarded by the masses as mere instruments of sensual pleasure; to restore them to their first dignity, and place them once more upon the throne so long usurped by fashion, luxury, and rank sensuality, is indeed a great and bold undertaking."
>
> WIELAND.

Meaning of the word art-doctrine.

IN the general Introduction to this book I stated my intention of avoiding all technical questions. That we can learn a great deal from Wagner in the matter of technique—musical, poetical, dramatic technique, is beyond all question; but this is for technicians. "Technique may be spoken about," says Wagner, "but of course only among artists; the outsider must never hear of it."[1] And if we leave the narrower limits of technique, everything else, that is to say, what the masters called intellectual rioting in music, is distinctly to be condemned, or if that is saying too much, at least it would be out of place in a Wagner biography. The hunt for motives and reminiscences, for variations and parallel passages, the desire to find in every chord some special unfathomable meaning, to hear an invocation of spirits in every innocent note which is played, is harmless, in some

[1] Letter to Louis Köhler of July 24, 1853 (printed in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1895, p. 2).

cases even useful, but has nothing to do with Wagner's art-doctrine. In general nothing is more dangerous than the attempt to deduce technical lessons from works of art; only an undoubted genius could do it successfully, and the extreme caution with which genius goes to work may be seen in the reverential reserve which Wagner maintains when speaking, as he often does, of his true master, Beethoven. We may notice too how Goethe gradually learned caution in his judgment of Shakespeare as a model; how, after hastily imitating, he left him again, and did not attain full, living insight until much later. The mischief wrought by Greek art of every kind with the aid of the æstheticians is immense, simply because we are, and always have been, bent on drawing lessons, *i.e.* laws from them, when manifestly they have only one lesson to teach: that men who could create such glories, and were of the same flesh and blood as ourselves, must have breathed quite another intellectual atmosphere, and been surrounded by quite a different society. They were a nation of artists; we are not; that is the great lesson, the only one to be drawn from their works.

This leads us at once to the question, what Wagner means by the expression *art-doctrine?* Neither a musical tendency nor an artistic system. The *Meister* himself makes merry over the so-called Wagner tendency; with bitter sarcasm he says: "wherein my tendency lies is a question which puzzles no one more than myself. Perhaps in the fact that for a time people had a preference for *libretti* on mediæval subjects; the Edda too, and generally the bleak North were considered good sources on which to draw for *libretti.* And not only the choice and character of the *libretti* appeared important for the new tendency, but many other things besides, especially '*through-composition*,'[1] and above all the ceaseless interference of the orchestra in the affairs of the singer, in all which composers were the more liberal from the fact that latterly orchestral compositions have shown a considerable amount of 'tendency' in respect of instrumentation, harmonization and modulation" (*Ueber das Opern-Dichten und Komponieren*, x. 224). And with regard to the so-called "Wagner system," he says at the close of his chief work, *Oper und Drama:* "Anyone who supposes that I have endeavoured to lay down an arbitrary theoretical system for the guidance of future musicians and poets has not wished to understand me" (iv. 255). Neither technical accomplishments therefore, nor any special habits or characteristic manner of composing poetry and music, can be called a "tendency," all these are quite personal and impossible to imitate; only one person can succeed with them; nor is it any rigid system, such as people endeavour to extract from Wagner's works and writings, as they did with the works and thoughts of former art-heroes—none of this is Wagner's art-doctrine![2]

The one thing which we may denote with this high-sounding name is that for which Wagner fought, undaunted, untired and undiscouraged throughout the

[1] Germ.: "*Durchkomponieren.*'

[2] The French composer Augusta Holmès relates that Wagner gave her this advice: "Above all, belong to no *school*—not even that of Wagner."

second half of his life in his writings and with his deeds, and to which he always returned; it is the doctrine of *the dignity of art*.

Art and life.

In the very first work of the second half of his life, "*Kunst und Revolution*," Wagner begins with the Greeks, and again and again in the further course of his life he points to them, most minutely and most distinctly in *Religion und Kunst*, but not with any vain notion of extracting "eternal rules" from their architecture, their sculpture, their music, or their drama, but because the mere ruins of "that world teach all future ages how the subsequent course of its life might be shaped so as to render it endurable" (*Beethoven*, ix. 141).[1] According to Wagner then, true art possesses such a dignity that we may find the highest instruction even in its ruins; they teach us, not how to make works of art, but *how to fashion our lives*.

In the last section we saw the high office which Wagner ascribes to art. From its influence alone he hopes the incentive to come for the regeneration of the human race, *i.e.* for a more endurable shaping of life. But the contemplation of those very ruins teaches us that it can only be shaped worthily when "art is the highest moment of human life." That it holds that position in our modern world cannot be asserted: rather does our public art—especially dramatic art—fall under Rossini's definition: "Pastime must be regarded as the beginning and end of all art."[2] Whatever tries to go further than this is, as Wagner says, only "a *wish*, expressed more or less clearly . . . an admission of our impotence." And if we remain by the impotent wish, the reason is that art lacks the nourishing soil of a life to which it might in truth belong, that it is "an artificial art," a superfluity, a luxury. "Only from life can the desire for art spring, and only from life can it draw matter and form. . . . Only by the appearance of its conditions in life itself can the art-work come into being" (*cf.* iii. 72). That is what Wagner learnt from the Greeks.

Two parts of the doctrine.

The reader will have observed that this view of life, as an organism most surely and most "endurably" to be shaped by the means of art, and of art as its "highest moment," which can only draw matter and form from life, rests upon the same antithetical mode of thought as that which we met with in his politics, his philosophy, and his doctrine of regeneration. Here indeed the two theses involve no contradiction; their connection together, even their mutual organic dependence upon each other, is very obvious. But life and art are, with us, two different things, our art lies altogether outside our public life, which indeed could supply it neither with matter nor form, and on the other hand, our lives would not be altered one jot if all public art were to disappear to-morrow, and so it is not at first sight quite clear how one of these factors is to influence the other. Wagner has admitted this condition of affairs at the present time quite frankly, with his usual sincerity. "In this life of the future, art will be that which to-day it can only long to be, and not really be; but life will become

[1] *Cf.* Schiller: *Über die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen. Brief* vi.

[2] Letter of June 21, 1868 (the day of the first performance of *Meistersinger!*).

all that it can ever hope to be only by receiving art into its bosom" (*Oper und Drama*, iv. 284). And here as before the objection which might be raised on the ground of this double *hysteron proteron* against the validity and utility of Wagner's doctrine, could at most possess the doubtful value of a purely logical argument. Wagner did not concern himself any more about it. Human society must be thoroughly reconstructed, and this can only be done with the aid of art —which, as we know, must not be separated from religion; art must be inspired with new creative breath, and that again can only be drawn from life. Had the race undergone harmonious development ever since the time of the Greek tragedies (according to Xenophon the true makers of Greece) it would be impossible to conceive of life as inartistic, or of art continuing to vegetate independently of life. Wagner's double thesis too would then be equally inconceivable. But now "the great revolution of mankind,"[1] the first sign of which appeared "in the breaking up of the Greek tragedy, in the dissolution of the Athenian state," has so widened the breach between life and art, that the mere thought of their being connected together generally either provokes a smile, or is rejected as monstrous. The unity of Wagner's view can therefore only be expressed in two separate theses;—each contains one half of the truth (but is not therefore half true, but wholly true); each must be recognised, understood, and sought after by itself.

As this double relation lies at the very root of the question, it affords the best basis for a discussion of Wagner's art-doctrine. We find in Wagner many dissertations on the dignity of art, *i.e.* its significance for the life of the entire human race, and this is the foundation of his art teaching. But we also find detailed attempts prophetically to determine the art-work in which the man who longs for art may at the present day recognize and attain his "highest moment."

In treating of Wagner's art-doctrine under two separate heads I am therefore following out his own thought: the first will deal with the *significance of art for life*, the second with *the perfect art-work*.

Artistic cognition.

In his treatise on the cognition of ideas, Schopenhauer distinguishes between ordinary cognition, which refers the things to ourselves, scientific cognition, which considers their relations to one another, and 'pure objective cognition,' in which "the very own being" of the object appears distinctly through its manifold relations; this last he calls "artistic cognition." Herewith a fundamental idea of Wagner—an idea which was his long before he knew Schopenhauer—is expressed with absolute definiteness. The artist never attained the precision of the philosopher, and probably never tried to; this is not surprising, but it is the reason why many of his utterances on this point have a paradoxical appearance, until we are at home in his philosophy. "The fulfil-

[1] See p. 137.

ment of science is its redemption in the poetic art" is for instance a sentence absolutely unintelligible to those who are not prepared; nor does its further elucidation help us much. "Science can attain complete surety of itself only in the art work, in the work which *directly* represents man and Nature—so far as this last attains conscious being in man" (*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 129). Only the philosopher could supply intelligible concepts for the clear perceptions of the poet; he did it in the manner just stated, and now we perfectly understand that Wagner distinguished the same three stages of cognition as did Schopenhauer, and that he founded the dignity of art upon his view that artistic cognition is objective, highest cognition.[1] "The path of science is from error to knowledge; the end of science is the justification of the unconscious; the activity of the consciousness attained by science, the representation of the life which it has shown us, the image of its necessity and truth—is art" (iii. 56, 57, 55).

The deep philosophical significance here ascribed to art is evident. And as it exactly agrees with Schopenhauer's view we may refer to him for the purely metaphysical treatment of the question.

The agreement between Schopenhauer and Wagner will be seen if we look deep enough. The philosopher and the artist reached the same point by different routes, and are thence led on to quite different tracks. The philosopher argues: "Philosophy has been studied for so long in vain, because it was sought by the way of science, instead of by that of art."[2] Artistic objective cognition served his *thought*, his metaphysics. The artist on the other hand, who "in his very art, beyond its forms, sought life" (i. 7) argued from this that art was the true fashioner of man.

Art as the educator of men.

About purely objective cognition, which proceeds from the simple artistic mood, Wagner says: "Man then speaks with Nature, and she answers him. Does he not understand Nature better than the observer with the microscope? What does he understand of Nature, except what he does not need to understand? But the other learns that from Nature which the highest functions of his being require, and through which he learns to know Nature in its widest and fullest aspect—precisely that aspect which can never reveal itself to the most comprehensive understanding" (*Oper und Drama*, iv. 109). And in his *Beethoven*, where he is speaking of the might of the musical tone, he describes very finely how "the very own being of the object" proceeds from the artistic mode of perception. "He calls, and in the answer he recognises himself . . . his ear reveals to him that regarding which, in the distraction of his life, he had been

[1] I quote Schopenhauer here because, as far as I know, he has expressed most clearly and most decidedly what many other thinkers only felt vaguely. Kant for instance distinguished three faculties of cognition, and Baumgarten discovered "germs of philosophical cognition in the beautiful." It is however important to note that a profound distinction exists between the creative act of the artist and the cognition of the philosopher, but this, like all special philosophical and æsthetical speculations, lies beyond the scope of this book (*cf.* on this point Hausegger, *Das Jenseits des Künstlers*, also chap. iv. section 2).

[2] *Memorabilien*, p. 718.

deceived, namely that his innermost being is one with the innermost being of all those things which he observes, and that this perception alone will enable him to apprehend the real nature of the external world" (ix. 93). Wagner, who does not wish to develop this view of the significance of art into a system, and looks everywhere for life, draws the conclusion that "the special cultivation of science, which in its higher walks is never capable of working directly upon the genius of the people, is only important for the history of culture when it forms the crown of a beautiful popular education already existing; but the only education of the people is art" (*Deutsche Kunst und Deutsche Politik*, vii. 77). The high dignity of art therefore lies further in the fact that it not only leads to philosophic cognition, but that it also educates. It teaches man to understand Nature, it teaches him to understand himself. Wagner thinks with Novalis: "Only an artist can divine the meaning of life."

I have already several times in the course of this chapter laid stress upon the fact that art, by purifying and illuminating the human mind, is able to exert a dominating influence in many departments of our lives. To avoid repeating myself I would refer my readers to the section on regeneration, where we saw that, according to Wagner, it is the peculiar mission of art to indicate the right direction to men in their endeavours for free human dignity; above all I drew attention to the decisive importance of art for religion.[1]

I must now pass on to another point, the importance of which as a principle is very great.

Art of community.

Only to art in which all participate (*allgemeinsame Kunst*, is Wagner's own expression) does he ascribe this high significance, not to the egoistic solitary art which is born of caprice, to serve the whims and the luxury of individuals. "The true desire for art must be felt in common," the *Meister* writes in *Kunst und Klima;* "this community of artistic men will compose their works in concord with each other, completing the harmony of Nature, and at one therewith" (iii. 264). The single individual cannot produce this art; "only the collective man (*der Gemeinsame*) fully satisfied in life can do it" (iii. 74). One section of Wagner's treatise, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, is headed: "The people, as the force conditioning the art-work," and elsewhere he says: "They (the exalted artists) cannot produce the great, real, one art alone; we must all coöperate therein. The tragedy of Aeschylos and Sophocles was the work of Athens" (iii. 28). Only this art in which all participate, and which is not a separate thing from this life, only the art which can be regarded as "the highest product of man, developed to sensible beauty in concord with himself and with Nature" (iii. 20) is the "educator of the people"; it alone can exert any influence on the conformation of human society and upon religion. Goethe's great words: "Only mankind in its entirety can apprehend Nature; only mankind in its entirety can live humanly," seem as if coined for Richard Wagner. But the Bayreuth *Meister* has imparted a new

[1] See pp. 185-187.

significance to this view—which guided him throughout his whole life—by declaring that the disconnected perceptions and disconnected lives of men can and shall be gathered together in one perception and one life through art. That is what he means by "the redemption of science in the art of poetry" and "the redemption of utilitarian man in the artistic man."

Perhaps Wagner's view could be formulated as follows: *only in the highest art can the collective world consciously apprehend itself; only collective art is highest art.*

In a few words I will now indicate the considerations on which this assertion depends, and the far-reaching consequences to which it leads.

Art and science.

That observation leads to synthesis is shown not only by art but by the whole course of modern natural science; for in science too one-sided analysis only brings dismemberment and confusion. Nature itself, even in its smallest parts, is a whole,[1] and science progresses, not by piling up fact upon fact, but by arranging facts together to new and apprehensible ideas. Laplace and Darwin are poetic seers, and so called empirical science, the roots of which lose themselves in metaphysical antinomies, bears poetic blossoms on its highest branches. It must however be remembered, that art offers something essentially different from scientific synthesis; in the proper sense of the word there is here no synthesis at all. Artistic cognition is, as Schopenhauer says, *pure objective cognition.* Science on the other hand remains within the categories of causality and relation. In truth the procedure of the artist consists, not in bringing together things which are separate, but in grasping what is apparently manifold, and presenting it in its essential unity.[2] Here neither analysis nor synthesis take place. In science, individuality is always sacrificed for the sake of the genus, the concrete therefore for the sake of an abstraction; art preserves it as a sacred possession; as required by Schiller, "it seizes the individuality of things truly and chastely"; it manifests the general in the individual, but not by systematically combining and mutilating, to show analogies and homologies with other individuals, but by freely developing this individuality, and by bringing forward its characteristic features, and so showing this concrete individual as the real, living, only substance of the universal, which beyond this is a mere abstraction. To science therefore there remains its own proper domain, and this is closed to art but art alone directly apprehends the universal.[3]

The following facts must however be noted. The immense quantity of material with which science has to deal makes a large body of inquirers necessary; none the less is it essentially egoistic in its nature; between it and

[1] "Müsset im Naturbetrachten
Immer Eins wie Alles achten."—Goethe.

[2] "The simple conceals itself in the manifold."—Goethe.

[3] The relation between State and Art is analogous. Wagner has indicated it very clearly in a short sentence: "Art is eternal, because it always presents the finite truly and faithfully, the State is final because it wishes to set bounds to eternity" (*Entwürfe*, p. 18).

the outside world there is no point of contact; it has no fatherland; even the scholar only possesses so much of it as he has earned for himself, and that remains incommunicable, the exclusive property of a scientific class; for science is only communicable when it puts forth blossom as poetry. True, living art, on the other hand, can only come into being and continue by "universality." Precisely the artistic genius too—however he may seem to create of his own free impulse—is tied by a thousand threads to his surroundings. The impression of his surroundings is determining for the poet. "When I try to explain the artistic faculty to myself I can do so in no other way than by identifying it in the first instance with the faculty of receptiveness," these are Wagner's words in his *Mittheilung an meine Freunde*. That too is the meaning of his paradoxical assertion: "The real inventor has always been the people . . . the single individual can invent nothing, but only acquire possession of an invention" (E., 19). He protests too altogether against the title genius. "It is a most superficial and inane proceeding to derive the decisive element of artistic gift from some capacity which we call *genius*, and think that we have fully accounted for it." Its real strength is communistic. "A power possessed in common, including as an effective agent within itself the individual power which we foolishly believe ourselves to have fathomed by calling it *genius*" (iv. 305-309). Be it well observed that herewith Kant's remark: "beautiful art is the art of genius," is not contradicted; how could living genius deny itself? Kant further observes that the ordinary man only differs in degree from the greatest scientific discoverer (the example which he gives is Newton), but from genius—a term which belongs only to the artist—he differs specifically. Wagner's view is exactly the same. Herewith he only gives expression to the profound truth that genius, though specifically differing from its surroundings, does not come into being independently of them, does not as it were fall from heaven, but is the living blossom of a *joint power*, itself bringing forth new seeds. And the works of the artist who proceeds from this joint power must be enjoyed in common, for, unless they affect the souls of others sympathetically, they can never come into existence at all. Most of all is this true of the highest art, the dramatic: "the drama is only conceivable as the fullest expression of a desire felt in common for artistic utterance; this desire will show itself in common participation therein. When either is wanting, the drama is not a necessary, but an arbitrary product of art" (iii. 129).

Art as the saviour during life.

If the reader considers these two theses together; first the unrivalled *uniting* power of art, secondly the truth that art must grow out of a *common* power, he will at once observe that the highest common art which was before Wagner's mind, and which he sometimes calls the art-work of the future, is the fulfilment of a longing, mighty and sorrowful, felt by all mankind. It is the longing for release from the endless disunion into which human society sinks ever deeper, and in which the single individual rightly feels himself no longer as a man, but almost as an artificial *homunculus*, as the minutest fragment

of an enormous chain of wheels. No one, not even the mightiest intellect, is able to oversee everything which this entirety of mankind apprehends, split up as it is into a thousand special departments, still less to assimilate it in himself. The further the development proceeds, the more knowledge accumulates, the more complicated the machinery of life becomes, the less is included in the horizon of any single individual. Its relative value undergoes progressive depreciation. This evolution takes place of necessity; to retard or make it retrograde would be inconceivable; and yet who could be blind to the dangers of a state in which the individual has an ever-diminishing share in the intellectual store of the entire community, until the community itself at last becomes little more than an abstraction? It was at this that Schiller expressed his alarm: "Man, bound as he is to a small fragment of the whole, himself develops as a fragment; always the eternal monotonous noise of the wheel which he turns in his ears, he never develops the harmony of his being; instead of receiving the stamp of humanity on his own nature, he receives that of his business, his science . . . the mischief of this intellectual tendency is not confined to science and productiveness; it shows itself no less in his feelings and his acts." And Schiller too points to art as the only possible salvation! "Man regains unity through the ideal" (*Ueber Naïve und Sentimentale Dichtung*). Here then Wagner stands on exactly the same ground as Schiller, and inclines no less to Goethe. In the section on regeneration I pointed out the profound difference between the German conception of regeneration and the French, and I must here remark that in nothing does this show itself more than in their different estimates of the dignity of art. Rousseau—himself an artist—finds it impossible to speak contemptuously enough of art in his theoretical writings. Goethe calls the highest art "the magic of the wise." Schiller teaches: "mankind has lost its dignity; it is for art to save it." Beethoven says of his art, it is "the one and only immaterial entrance to the higher world of knowledge." Wagner acknowledges that in the extraordinary intensification of the means of expression now at the poet's command (owing to the development of music) "a profound inner requirement of man has been fulfilled" (vii. iii. 150).

That Germany's greatest poets have expressed themselves with such unanimity of opinion about the dignity of art, and its high calling with regard to the further fortunes of the human race, may well give us cause for reflection.

Like a wheel revolving with increasing rapidity, so the whirl of life forces us ever further asunder, ever further from "the firm soil of nature"; soon it must launch us into sheer nothing! Then art appears, "the kind Saviour of life," as Wagner finely says; it liberates the thought by endowing it with form, redeems science, and teaches men "to understand nature in an infinitely grand compass"; in the wretched utilitarian man it awakens the harmony of his human nature; to the philosopher it shows the way of pure objective cognition; to him who thirsts for freedom it points out the path which leads to human dignity; it saves the substance of religion, and with it leads mankind from the state of

"organized and legalized murder and robbery," created by politics, to a new state of true morality, such as artistic humanity alone can bring. For art binds together what has been forcibly sundered; it joins the broken fragments to a perfect whole; art manifests unity in the multifold, rest in movement, the eternal in the temporal; it delivers the mind from the confusion and endless multiplicity of its perceptions, and reveals the eternally One.

That is the high mission of art, a mission which it can only fulfil when it is the common property of all.

The temptation is strong to follow Wagner into the details of his exposition, to learn from him how Greek art was destroyed by "casting off the bond of unity," namely religion; how the public art of the Greeks was "the expression of the deepest and noblest consciousness of the people," while with us deepest and noblest human consciousness is "the negation of our public art"; how modern art can only be regarded as "artistic handicraft," and the first step to its rebirth consists in "liberating it from the shameful bands in which it now languishes in the service of industry";[1] how "true art can only prosper on a basis of true morality," and the highest art "can only become fully intelligible to the people when it is the religious symbol of a perfect moral order." Here too I should especially wish to speak of the strong emphasis which Wagner lays upon the peculiar character of the German; for if "art which possesses any life at all must spring from community," it must in the first instance belong to the narrower community, the fatherland. *Fashion* will then appear as the certain mark of art not brought forth organically, but living egoistically for itself: "We have fallen under a positive curse from which only rebirth from the very foundation of our being can redeem us. Our whole being must be altered from the bottom, so that the conception of *fashion* may become quite meaningless, even for the external aspect of our lives" (ix. 138). It would also be important to point to Wagner's battle against the idea of art as an abstract concept, "from which our modern art has been constructed," and against æsthetic theory in general, since the motives by which the artist is impelled "spring from a law of fitness which cannot be expressed, but can only be seen in the finished art-work."[2] And much more.

But the space which remains for the discussion of this wide subject is very narrow. To avoid confusion therefore I prefer to confine myself, in treating of Wagner's art-doctrines, to the two points which I have mentioned: the significance of art, as a means of pure objective cognition, as the educator of the people, and as a "magic" power sent to lead men to their highest welfare—and the principle that only art which is common property of all is the highest art.

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[1] Art, as industry found its most naïve and most direct expression with the *jongleurs* of the middle ages, who exclaimed loudly before the commencement of a performance—

"Qui n'a point d'argent si ne s'assièche mie:
Car chil qui n'en ont point ne sont de ma partiè!"

Gautier, *Epopées françaises* (ii. 114).

[2] VIII. 138. *Cf.* especially too iii. 12 and 260, 278; vii. 152; viii. 191; x. 113, 114, etc.

When so high an office is ascribed to art, the question arises, What are we to understand by art? To this Wagner gives a very decided answer: *the drama is the highest art, and the most perfect drama is the purely human drama.* The most perfect art work.

We have now to determine the arguments upon which each of the two parts of this thesis is based.

In order clearly to indicate what Wagner means by *drama*, and in what way he was justified in regarding the drama, not as a variety of poetry, not even as a *variety* of art, but as high above all varieties, and as including within itself and conditioning all the artistic capacities of men, I must ask the reader to follow me along a path which is a little circuitous. Wagner's conception is indeed extremely clear and intelligible in itself; the only difficulty lies in its being so far removed from the notions which are current among us, and from the æsthetic systems of the schools.

In his work *Uber das Dichten und Komponiren*, written in 1879, Wagner draws a very judicious distinction between three degrees of the *poietes*, the seer, the poet and the artist; this distinction will help us, once for all, clearly to understand Wagner's conception of the drama. Seer, poet, and artist.

The seer apprehends, not the appearance, but the being of the world; "he sees, not the real, but the truthful, which is exalted high above all reality." In him is personified the unconscious, involuntary cognition of the people, the artistic cognition, of which we spoke in detail above. He therefore shares the creative gift of the people, "the power of inventing." What he invents is nothing more than the unaffected cognition of the *truthful* through the *Mâyâ* of reality. The poet, unlike the seer, is a *conscious* creator. Whether we regard him as identical with the seer, like Homer, or as a separate personality, the poet, as distinguished from the unconscious and spontaneous inventor, is "the knower of the unconscious, the intentional representer of the spontaneous" (iv. 171). Be it well observed that Wagner here distinguishes two capacities in the poet; he is a *knower* and a *representer;* in another place he has expressed this double nature of the poet in less abstract terms: "man is a poet in two ways, in apprehension and in communication" (iv. 39). And apprehension is, with the poet, conscious apprehension; communication intentional representation; therewith he is sufficiently distinguished from the seer. It is now clear that apprehension and representation will not necessarily stand on the same footing. The forms which appear before the eye of the seer are no fancies for *him;* they are realities; they speak to him in the wind, in the water, in the thunder, he sees them in the clouds, in the forest, in the light of the moon; their home is the whole infinity of Nature, from the murmuring brook to the stars which smile on him from above; these forms the poet seizes, consciously to *represent* them, that is to show them to others, to lead others to "the clairvoyant state of the poet." In every case the poet has to reproduce the infinite in a finite form. He begins by *relating* what he has seen. For this reason too Wagner says "the narrator is the real poet." The narrator has at his disposal, not only language, which is

the highest, but at the same time the most strictly conditioned faculty of the poet;[1] his words are accompanied by rhythmic movements of the body, defining gestures; the words themselves too are sung, not spoken. Wagner calls this language of gesture: "the most realistic of all arts," and to the language of tones alone belongs, according to Shakespeare, the power "to hale souls out of men's bodies." It is thus that the primitive poet sings; he does not confine himself to words and concepts, he is at once singer and representer. Of Greek poetry, for example, we can only have a very meagre conception, for of Homer, Pindar, Simonides, and the rest, only the skeletons of their poems are left.[2] Besides these "purely human" languages—words—tones—gestures—the poet may draw upon all that Nature offers for the more complete representation of the picture within him, he may "fashion out of natural materials" architecture, sculpture, painting, etc. This faculty of "communicating the inner picture to the outer world" Wagner calls the artistic faculty, and the more completely the poet succeeds in communicating what he *knows*, in representing to the senses what he has *seen*, the more he will deserve the name of *artist*.[3]

The value in such distinctions lies in their helping us to form clear concepts. We are not concerned with theoretical æsthetics, but only with indubitable facts lying at the foundation of the human mental faculties, and it is of very great advantage to determine the concept of *seeing*, as a psychological state antecedent to that of poetical composition proper—whether in the life of a people or of an individual—and to draw the distinction between the poet and the artist.[4]

It is not necessary to commit oneself to any philosophical school to know that all the creative art-work of genius must proceed from observation, from clear *seeing*. Only, as Wagner warns us, we must not confound seeing with *staring*. "Of the two kinds of blind men, he that is blinded by the things of the sensible world is the blindest," says an Indian proverb; the works of all the greatest poets prove that creative "seeing" does not rest satisfied with external details, but penetrates to the deepest being, and illuminates that with its own inner light. But when Wagner remarks that "all Greek genius is nothing more than artistic imitation of

[1] The celebrated American philologist Whitney writes: "The idea that the voice is the specific organ of language is a deep-rooted fallacy; it is only one organ amongst others." (The Life and Growth of Language by William Dwight Whitney.)

[2] Whoever has, like the author of this book, travelled in the Balkan countries, can at least form a living picture of this genuine, ancient art of poetry. There the bard still *sings* the beautiful heroic songs. He accompanies them with a one-stringed instrument (the Guzla), and the pauses in the song —which often lasts for hours—are filled up with this music. Tone, gesture, and especially the expression of the face, change every moment, and the whole is so thrillingly dramatic that the crowd around hang motionless on the lips of the narrator; sometimes the audience breaks out into loud laughter, or rage gleams in the eyes of all, their fists are clenched, curses are whispered from mouth to mouth. . . . Rarely do our most famous companies of actors produce an effect like these simple poets, who have not yet attained the rank of "artists."

[3] The German word for art, *Kunst*, comes from *können*—to be able, "to *can*." See Wagner, iii. 88.

[4] *Cf.* here Goethe's comparison of the rhapsodist and the mimic.

Homer," we must admit that the distinction here implied between seer and poet is not inessential. By means of this conception of *seeing* we learn very clearly that the basis of the artistic work of the poet is not, as is generally supposed, the writing of poetry, not at least in the common, narrow sense of *word-poetry*, but that it is rather a rare *power of observation*, whether it be the actual creative *seeing* of a Homer, or a Goethe (in *Faust*), or the imitative seeing of most poets and artists. The poet seeks to evoke these forms, which he has seen so clearly with his own inner vision, before the eyes of others. By the more and more conscious employment of the various means at his disposal—words, tones, gesture—by widening their expression, and systematically overcoming the technical difficulties in their use, and thus discovering and fixing the laws which spring from their essential nature, he raises poetical composition to an art. Here, too, we must admit that the difference between poet and artist, though not so sharply defined as that between seer and poet, is very useful. The application to the drama will follow immediately.

Schiller says we have fallen away from Nature by artificiality; art would lead us back to it again. In art Nature is what the seer sees. In the endeavour to reproduce it, the original intention has been split up like a ray entering a dark room; the single arts were developed independently, and drawn further and further away from their real purpose, that of bringing what the ecstatic seer had seen before the eyes of men, not in a fragmentary way, not congealed and dead, but living and entire. The more the single arts renounced the service of the one true creative force, and lived egoistically, or independently of each other, the more they lapsed into artificiality. True art will be like a powerful lens collecting all the scattered lights to a focus in a single ray, leading back to Nature, the inexhaustible source of all invention. The highest art, therefore, is that which does not merely appeal to the imagination, or to this or the other sense, but that which returns to the original intention of all poetic composition, and while utilizing all the means of expression, enormously enriched as they have been in the meantime, has for its object the immediate representation of the things which the seer has seen. This highest art is the drama.

The seer has seen forms, he has heard their voices, he has followed their changing life. No single art can fully reproduce what he has seen. Poetry may describe, the painter depict, the musician may awaken the mood in our hearts. But the drama is not a *kind* of art; the drama which was in Wagner's mind is—we cannot emphasize it too strongly—not a kind of poetry, it is the reflected image of the world, mirrored back from our "silent inner being" (x. 142), the reflection of that which the seer has seen. It is "the return through art to Nature" proclaimed by Schiller. The drama is art κατ' ἐξοχήν.

Here I must ask the reader's permission to make a short controversial digression; it is done for the sake of clearness. Controversial digression.

It is not true, as has been asserted again and again by malicious and ignorant people, that Wagner denied the right of any art to exist singly;

this is clear from numerous passages in his writings. I have already had occasion to quote his words with regard to landscape painting (see p. 171), and those who have read his remarks on the Italian painters of the best period in *Religion und Kunst*, and on every one of the single arts in *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, who know his profound conception of architecture,[1] who have perused the unrivalled and masterly survey of the literature of the world which adorns the second part of *Oper und Drama*, and above all, those who are possessed of the treasure of criticisms on music and musicians stored up in his works, will find it difficult to believe that misunderstanding and ignorance should be so tenacious of life. As far back as 1850 Wagner complains bitterly of this habit of perverting his teaching; even then a newspaper had written: "It seems that Wagner wishes to proclaim the death of sculpture," and with regard thereto the *Meister* says: "One can only fold one's hands in the conviction that all talking and writing is vain and profitless" (U., 47). To proclaim the death of the single arts would be simply to talk nonsense; Wagner writes the very opposite. "In the drama, illuminated by music, the people will find itself and every art ennobled and beautified" (I. viii.).[2] True, none of the single arts will appear alone in the drama; here the rays of different colour and refrangibility are united again to the original, pure, white light of the sun. But from this source of all true inspiration each single art will draw fresh strength and undying life.

But at the same time another objection, just the opposite to this, has been, and still is brought against Wagner, namely that he wished the arts to be mixed up in a confused medley. But in *Oper und Drama* Wagner writes very clearly, just after the reference to Lessing: "Purity of the art-kind will be the first condition of its being intelligible; to mix up the different arts would only lead to obscurity." Of course this limitation only applies to the isolated single arts. "Such an artificial art can only succeed by strictly observing limits and bounds; it has to proceed circumspectly, and with the greatest care, in order to preserve the imagination, which here takes its place as the immediate representer, from confusing excesses" (iv. 6). Those who wish to apply such limits to the drama fail to apprehend "the enormous difference between these *arts* and true *art* in the strict sense." Here we are reminded of the prophetic words of Herder: "the artist, when deprived of action, was driven by necessity to a certain course, but why should the artist who has action, and knows no such necessity, be driven to it?" (*Kritische Wälder*, xi.). "The artist with action" then, who knows nothing of such necessity, is the dramatist, and he expresses himself "by actual representation to the universal receptiveness of mankind, by

[1] "This architect, who is so much neglected at the present day, is the real poet of formative art: with him sculptor and painter must coöperate in the same way as the musician and the actor with the real poet" (v. 21).

[2] Of the spoken drama in particular he says, "manifestly then there is a side of the world very seriously concerning us, the terrible teaching of which can only be communicated through a process of contemplation in which music remains silent" (ix. 184).

addressing his complete sensible organism." This objection therefore falls to the ground.

The drama.

The essential thing then is to understand that what Wagner means by *drama* is not a particular branch of literature, nor yet the union of different kinds of art, but—I repeat it—*art* κατ' ἐξοχήν. That is, the completion of that poetic art, the simple, sublime object of which is to represent the vision of the seer. To create forms; that is the work of the drama. The real poet, Wagner says, is "the inventor and fashioner."

Nothing shows more strikingly how far we are from viewing the drama from this, the only genuine artistic standpoint, how entirely accustomed we are to see in it only a product of literature, than the fate of Wagner's own works. We still hear the question put sceptically: "Can Wagner then be called a great poet?" And the majority of philologists and æstheticians answer with a decided *No!* A man can then conceive such figures as the Flying Dutchman and Senta, Tannhäuser, and Elsa von Brabant in his youth, as Isolde, Wotan, Brünnhilde, Hans Sachs, Parsifal in his maturity, figures which belong henceforward and for all time as completely and inalienably to the living consciousness of the entire human race as an Achilleus—an Œdipus, a Hamlet or a Faust, and yet the question may appear admissible whether the man who created such things was a mighty poet! A Greek would never have comprehended such a question even being put; there comes a future not far distant when we shall comprehend it just as little; but now, in asking it, we testify to our own intellectual wretchedness and poverty. Now we may understand how Wagner came in the course of years to see that "art itself must be reborn; we only know the shadow of art in the strict sense; it has become estranged from real life, and is now only to be found in meagre popular remnants" (I. vii.).

This new birth which we look for can only succeed if we return to the source of all art, and of all art-kinds, *the drama*, which fashions life with the aid of all the senses and the employment of every means of expression. This drama, as Wagner conceives it, stands in exactly the same relation to epic and lyric poetry, to the recited drama and all the single arts, as does the seer to the poet and the artist. This drama is the Original, the Fundamental, the Immeasurable, the Illimitable, the eternally True, the source from which all inspiration flows, the root through which the nourishment for new strength is imbibed.

That is the art of which Wagner says that if we had it "all the other arts would be contained in it, and would receive their virtue therefrom" (v. 8). It is: *highest art.*

The purely human drama.

But now a very important consideration arises. We have gained a very clear conception of the drama as the highest art, but it is not yet sharply defined, and round it we must now draw a line which, although not, as we shall see, narrowing its range, excludes everything which does not belong to it. Under one condition alone can the highest common art ensure the coöperation of every separate kind of art in the highest fulness of each: its matter must

be *purely human*. Only the purely human drama therefore is the perfect drama.

The purely human is "that which constitutes the nature of the human species as such," "that which is freed from all convention, all historic formality"; it is that from which "all that is particularistic and accidental" has been removed (iv. 111, 127, 388). A purely human action is one from the motives of which all petty and indeterminate elements have been discarded, and from the substance of which all extraneous matter, everything of the nature of pragmatic history, of political convention and dogmatic religion has been removed (*cf.* iv. 149). A historical drama then is not a purely human drama; just as little does this title belong to a piece which turns upon conventional notions of honour. There is no intention here of pronouncing any "absolute criticism" of such poets as Shakespeare and Calderon, whom no one admires more warmly than Wagner; what is meant is that "a subject matter which addresses itself exclusively to the understanding can only be communicated in the language of words"; and that only a poetic intention which "can be communicated completely from the understanding to the feelings," admits and requires the coöperation of the correlative art—namely music, the might of which was acknowledged by Shakespeare himself. The purely human is the highest, is universally true, and when we have to find the most direct and at the same time the most certain expression for the highest and the truest that mankind has to express, then the entire man must be together, that is understanding, body and heart must be united in ardent, all-penetrating love—but no part must be left alone to operate for itself (iii. 81).

This determination of the purely human as the only thing which may and can be expressed in the *highest* dramatic art-work, I regard as one of Wagner's greatest achievements; perhaps the greatest. Once this is understood, the whole doctrine of the new drama follows of itself; it is an art in which, according to Wagner's assurance, it will be possible always to create anew. It is true that people have since thought to discover the same teaching in Aristotle, and Wagner himself bases his teaching directly upon Aeschylus and Sophocles, whose "purely human art is the most beautiful outcome of Hellenic history" (*Kunst und Klima*, iii. 256); but we moderns have certainly lost the knowledge of this law of the necessity of adhering exclusively to the purely human when striving for the highest ideal of art.

Historical retrospect.

It is most affecting to read how Schiller, for instance, longs to get away from his historical subjects, and to find "a subject which shall be *merely* passionate and *human*" (Letter to Goethe of March 19th, 1799); most edifying it is to learn from Goethe that "the concept destroys all objective contemplation, and therewith all poetry"; here he is quite in harmony with Wagner, who repeatedly insists upon complete communication to the *senses*, a condition which can only be fulfilled in the purely human art-work. On the other hand, the honest attempts made by musicians during two centuries (1600 to 1800) directly to revive the Greek tragedy deserve the highest respect, from

the modest endeavours of a Peri and a Monteverde to the great achievements of a Gluck. True, they never succeeded in gaining what they wanted; it was impossible that they should, whilst they continued to pour new wine into old bottles, by wedding modern music to antique poetry. The real interest of this musical school lies in the endeavour to meet an increasing desire, a longing felt by the greatest poets. During the second half of the last century we may observe a very important process going on in Germany; poet and musician approach nearer to each other, each filled with the same longing for a higher art-work, without however either finding the key to this new empire, the magic word which would cause its gates to fly wide apart. The greatest musicians felt that their art could not achieve its highest ends unless a poetic idea—not necessarily words—formed the foundation. Gluck, for instance, writes: "Even the greatest composer will produce indifferent music unless his enthusiasm has been awakened by the poet" (1773, in the *Mercure de France*). Schiller again feels that "the drama inclines to music"; he relates how his own poetic ideas proceeded "from a certain musical mood"; he says: "I have always felt some faith in the opera, and hoped that, like the choruses in the old Bacchic festivals, tragedy might proceed in a nobler form therefrom" (Letter to Goethe of December 29th, 1797); he conceived his *Jungfrau von Orleans* under the immediate influence of a work of Gluck, and in his *Brant von Messina* he produced a *pendant* to Beethoven's Choral Symphony. Goethe dreamed of a union of poetry, painting, song, music, and acting, and he says: "If all these arts were made to work together, with the charms of youth and beauty, in a single evening, and all of a high degree of excellence, there would be a feast such as no other could compare with" (Eckermann, March 22nd, 1825). In the meantime some of the great intellects of Germany (and of France), intellects rather critical than productive, had more than once approached very near to the solution of the problem. Lessing for instance showed deep insight when he said: "Nature seems to have designed poetry and music, not so much to combine together, as rather to be one and the same art. And there really was a time when both together made one art. Whenever we think of such a thing now, we make one art *subsidiary* to the other; we know nothing of *community* of effort, each part bearing an equal share in the result" (*Fragmente zu Laocoon*). And Herder too looks for an art-work "in which poetry, music, action and scenery are *one*"; he too therefore is of opinion that the organic union of arts, various in themselves, will not be a confused medley. Herder specially mentions "the purely human emotions" as the only field in which this common effort can be exerted. For the rest we must here, when speaking of this early mention of the purely human, once more quote Schiller, who wishes "that poetry would purify itself, would concentrate and intensify its world, that it might be more effective therein" (*loc. cit.*). To concentrate and intensify, that is what Wagner states in the second and third books of *Oper und Drama* to be the fundamental law for the *subject-matter* of the purely human drama.

I shall return to speak of the historical significance of Wagner's great discovery. The reader will see from these few remarks that long before Wagner appeared a remodelling of the drama had been expected and longed for by Germany's greatest poets and musicians; even then the principal difficulty was recognized to be that of obtaining an *organic* as distinguished from an *arbitrary* connection between word and tone, and there were already some clear heads who distinctly recognized that the problem was not technical, but more especially concerned with the *subject matter*. Richard Wagner solved the problem thus: "The matter which the word-tone-poet has to express is the purely human, freed from all conventionality" (iv. 380).

The relation between drama and music.

This, the first and the only law of the most perfect drama, could perhaps only have been clearly recognized by a musician, for of all arts music alone is always purely human; that is, it is never special, fortuitous, individual; it can only express that which is common to all, in short, the purely human. In one of his early works Wagner says: "That which music expresses is eternal, infinite, ideal; it does not express the passion, the love, the longing of this or the other individual, in this or the other situation, but passion, love, longing in themselves" (i. 183). Music therefore it is which imposes this *conditio sine qua non* of remaining by the purely human. And if Lessing is right in thinking that poetry and music were intended by nature to be one and the same art, we now know that this highest art has to do only with what is highest in men; it is organically incapable of serving to portray the conventional, the historical, the fortuitous; any attempt to use it for such a purpose must necessarily fail.

The relation between music and the drama is however far from being a limitation on either. For within the limits imposed the possibilities of expression are infinite. Moreover music is more closely related to the drama, the purely human drama, than to any other art. The stage picture and the music are the eye and the ear of the creative seer.

It is not my intention to discuss the metaphysics of music. Wagner adopted Schopenhauer's view, and developed it to a philosophy of great depth in his essay *Beethoven*. But he worked out his doctrine of the word-tone-drama long before he knew Schopenhauer. It is therefore unnecessary to assume a connection between Wagner's artistic cognition (which is quite incontestable, and is destined to be the property of all), and Schopenhauer's metaphysics for "the happy few."

The first thing is clearly to grasp the relation between music and the drama; to recognize the fact that music stands apart, quite separate from the other single arts; that through its action being incomprehensible to the logical understanding it is like "a power of Nature, which men perceive but do not understand" (*Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 105). This was at least surmised two thousand three hundred years ago by the penetrating mind of the Stagirite, who attributes to music a supreme ethical influence, and ascribes to it, and to it alone, the power of

representing the inner man.[1] Almost equally perspicuous and objective are Goethe's words: "The dignity of art appears perhaps in the most eminent degree in music, because music has no matter to be discounted; it is all form and substance, and *it exalts and ennobles everything which it expresses.*" With these words too the exceptional character of music is very clearly expressed. Those German poets however who were naturally musical saw the matter still more clearly. Heinrich von Kleist astonishes us by saying: "I regard music as the root of all the other arts"; and E. T. A. Hoffmann, a word-tone-poet, not indeed amongst the most vigorous, but certainly amongst the most refined and astonishingly gifted minds that Germany has ever produced, but who has been shamefully neglected in favour of smaller talents, says: "Music opens out to men an unknown realm, a world which has nothing in common with the outer world of the senses." This peculiar position of music has been indicated very finely and accurately by Wagner: "Music stands in the same relation to the complex of other arts as religion stands in to the church" (ix. 92). For this reason therefore, Kleist called it "the root of all arts." Wagner also brings Hoffmann's "unknown realm, which has nothing to do with the outer world of the senses, very directly home to us," and corrects the one-sidedness of his expression by comparing the musician with the seer (*cf.* ix. 112). The seer too looks inwards, not outwards; he sees the world, but not its single details, not what the senses perceive; he sees only the purely human, the true. But the seer is, as we have already remarked, the real creator of the forms, the father of the drama. Herewith a new relation between music and drama is suddenly opened out.

Does then music really possess the power to create forms? Indubitably. The earliest poets composed nothing without music; indeed, we are safe in asserting that with them music came first, binding together and establishing the unity, for as Goethe says, "music is all form and all substance." And if we travel down the stream of time which has passed since the first dramatic poets arose, to our own great Schiller, we see that his forms too spring from a musical mood, and we hear him solemnly proclaiming that "music in its noblest efforts must attain bodily form" (*muss Gestalt werden*).

Nothing can be more instructive and convincing than this. For there are still rampant among us æstheticians who think, with the philosopher Herbart, that the real essence of music lies in the rules of "single and double counterpoint," and who consequently refuse to allow it any higher significance. On the other hand we know it to be the *experience* of one of the greatest dramatists, Schiller, that his forms grew out of music, and we hear him assert with the confidence of genius that music must become bodily form. Wagner was filled with this very same consciousness, that music *is* not, but must *become*, bodily form, from his earliest youth. He discovered what Schiller did not yet know, that music is a female organism; it cannot bring forth of itself, it must be fertilized by the

[1] *Cf.* Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, ii. 2, pp. 735 and 771.

poetic seer; only in the drama can music receive form, and as music can unite organically only with the purely human drama, the definition may be made still more exact by saying that music can only receive bodily form in the purely human drama.

Herewith a very important step has already been gained. But it acquires its full value with the complementary postulate: "the purely human drama is able fully to create, only with the coöperation of music."

Regarding this relation between music and drama Wagner says: "Music stands in quite a wrong position to the drama, if it is regarded as a part of the whole: as such it is both superfluous and disturbing, and has consequently at last been entirely removed from the strict drama. If it is a part, it is that which at the beginning was the whole, and it now feels itself called upon to resume its old dignity as the mother which brought forth the drama. In this dignity it is neither first nor last, it is not the rival of the drama, but its mother. It sounds; and what it sounds may be seen on the stage; for that it calls you together; what it is you can only feel vaguely; it therefore reveals itself to your sight through the scenic parable, just as the mother reveals the mysteries of religion to her children by relating the sacred legends to them" (ix. 362). And in another place he says still more particularly: "The drama does not portray human characters, but allows them directly to display themselves, and so too music with its motives gives the character of all the phenomena of the world in their inmost self. Not only do the movements, forms and changes of these motives find their only analogy in the drama, but the drama itself, with the idea which it represents, can in truth only be fully and clearly understood by means of musical motives, with such movements, forms, and changes" (ix. 128).

The relation of mutual interdependence, that is the organic relation between music and the drama, is herewith very clearly laid down; but to make our perception of it complete it is necessary that we should know the *difference* between the two.

The drama calls up every capability of the artist and is directly served by each; it is itself originally "a picture, silent within ourselves," and everything, words, gestures, pantomime, plastic art,[1] can and must coöperate to make the picture visible; but its deepest, unspeakable, "purely human" *substance* it communicates to the ear in the all-powerful language of music. In this process of assuming form there are many stages, in the very lowest of which, in simple narration, and in the simple, motionless, silent picture, there is already form. Music on the other hand, without the picture is desolate, without the

[1] As the relation of plastic art to the drama may not at first be evident to those of my readers who are not at home in Wagner's works, I would refer them to the remarks upon sculpture contained in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*. On p. 166 of the third vol. of his collected works, Wagner says the release of plastic art will be when the stone is resolved into the flesh and blood of men, when the rigid monument of the past becomes the moving life of the present, and the soul of the sculptor passes into the body of the dancer.—G. A. H.

drama it cannot bring forth forms. "Music which does not bear a relation to an object, but wishes to fulfil it, *i.e.* to become the object itself, is no longer music, but a monstrous, fantastic abstraction of music and poetry"; "all pretence of being itself dramatic or characteristic only disfigures the real nature of music"; "music is in itself incapable of becoming the drama"; "it is a most unnatural proceeding for the musician to undertake to realize both the dramatic intention and its expression"; "all musical organism is in its nature feminine; it bears, but does not beget," etc. (iii. 301, 319, 324, 335, 387). Wagner expresses himself in the same sense a hundred times. But not only can music of itself never become drama; every attempt to paint for the eye and for the imagination will be a failure. "When the musician tries to paint, he produces neither music nor a picture," says Wagner (iv. 7); and of programme-music he says: "A programme rather provokes than silences the disturbing question *why?* it can never express the meaning of the symphony; this can only be done by the scenic representation of the dramatic action itself" (vii. 171). No one has insisted more strongly than Wagner that music, in the works of the mightiest of all poets in tones, Beethoven, did become drama, that is, that the great works of the master cannot be comprehended until we realize that he was essentially a dramatic poet; but he touches the bottom of the question on two occasions, when he calls him "the necessarily erring artist." Through Beethoven's "vigorous error" the deepest nature of music was revealed to Wagner. Not Gluck, but Beethoven, prepared the way for the purely human word-tone-drama.

For the right understanding of the position of music in the drama the knowledge of this historical fact is of great importance.

We saw that music alone is desolate; it can neither paint, nor describe, nor create forms, and the so-called absolute musician wanders about in "the boundless, grey, misty region of pure and absolute invention" (iii. 338). No less was it an error to suppose that words, thoughts, verses could determine the music. "Not the words of the librettist, be he a Goethe or a Schiller, can determine the music, the drama alone can do this; not the dramatic poem, but the actual drama moving before our eyes, as the visible picture of the music; word and language then belong to the action, no longer to the poetic *thought*" (ix. 135). Gluck's successful endeavours to adapt the tone to the words as accurately as possible, praiseworthy as they were, do not go to the root of the matter,[1] but "the inexhaustible power of music was made manifest to us by the vigorous error of Beethoven. Through his bold and fearless endeavour to realize the artistically necessary through the artistically impossible, we have learned the infinite capacity of music to solve every conceivable problem, if only it remains what it always must be—art of expression" (iii. 343).

Only in the drama can music become form and at the same time remain solely and entirely expression.

We now understand what Wagner means when he says that in the new

[1] See the next page.

drama Shakespeare's forms and Beethoven's melodies would coalesce into one and the same being (ix. 133). Here again Wagner, with his usual felicity of expression, has found a formula in which the relation between music and the drama is very pregnantly, and at the same time exhaustively characterized; speaking of his own works for the stage, he says he would prefer to call them "deeds of music become visible"[1] (ix. 364).

The relation between poetry and music.

Having now considered the relations between drama and music in general, we must examine more closely the position of music within this drama, and its relation to the other means of expression.

It is clear that the contiguity of word and tone, that is, the relation between poetry and music, will here form the *punctum saliens*. The picture as such, that which is brought before our eyes on the stage, is, as Wagner says, a reflection of the music. The richest music stands to the richest dramatic action just as the primitive dance tune does to the simple dance, which already expresses an action. They are two mutually complementary communications of the sensible man to the senses. "The senses which the man, as an object of art, addresses, are the eye and the ear; the eye apprehends the outer man, the ear the inner man" (iii. 78). With the *word* however a new element is brought in, a non-sensible element: *thought*.

How then is the most direct and most unconditioned expression of man, music, to be "wedded" to the indirect, conditioned world of thought, as Milton longed that it should be? He thought that music could be "married to immortal verse." Wagner does not think this possible. "The fact that music loses nothing of its character when set to the most different kinds of words shows the supposed relation of music to poetry to be quite illusory: for it is certain that when music is sung, what it conveys is not the poetic thought, which, especially in choruses, is not even intelligibly articulated, but at most that which it has excited in the musician as music, and to music" (ix. 125). Wagner's opinion that this relation of music to poetry is quite illusory will at first surprise many; it so flatly contradicts Gluck's maxim, "the object of music is to support poetry." But herewith the very root of the question is brought to view, and we see that Wagner's conception of the drama differs *in toto* from that of Gluck, with which it is almost always identified, as well as from that of his predecessors and successors. Wagner expressly says: "The union of music with poetry will always lead to the subordination of the latter" (ix. 126). He is therefore very far from thinking that music must *support* poetry; in his opinion it is not capable of doing so.

We may here note the profound insight of the acutest of Germany's poet-critics, Lessing, who declared in the words quoted above that Nature had intended poetry and music, not to be joined together, but to be one and the same art, not that one should help the other, but that both should work for their end together. That is exactly Richard Wagner's standpoint. On the one

[1] "Ersichtlich gewordene Thaten der Musik."

hand we have an absolute language of tones, on the other an absolute language of the understanding (iv. 123). To effect any sort of combination between them which should be of any avail would be impossible. Absolute music makes use of words "merely as a vehicle for the vocal song" (ix. 125). The understanding, which only composes poetry capable of being completely expressed in its own language, does not require music; on the contrary, "exactly in the degree in which poetry ceased to be a matter of feeling, and became one of the understanding, did the original creative alliance between the languages of gesture, tones and words in lyric art dissolve; the language of words was the child which left father and mother to find its own way alone in the wide world" (iv. 120). These words again express the case most clearly; the original alliance was not a *combination*, not a *union*, but a creative alliance. The relation of music to poetry will cease to be illusory when there is no longer any trace of an endeavour to coerce the absolute language of the understanding and the absolute language of tones into an impossible "marriage," when rather both—word and tone—spring spontaneously from a single higher purpose; this creative purpose is *the drama.* Directly the poet and the musician meet on the ground of the purely human drama, when the picture on the stage, the dramatic action (the most real of all arts!), the determining, form-giving vision of the poet, serves as a bond between them, and prescribes the laws of their action, there arises "a creative alliance," and the poet "wedded to tones" possesses means of expression such as he never had before—not even in the Greek drama; for there the technical development of music did not by any means keep pace with that of poetry, and the poet was compelled to describe and explain, where now he can express himself directly through music. Wagner prefers to compare the relation of the word-poet to the tone-poet with that of the man to the woman; the poet fertilizes, the musician bears. "The poet endeavours to concentrate the most widely ramified actions, feelings, and thoughts, intelligible only to the understanding, into one single motive, capable of directly affecting the feelings; the musician on the other hand expands the single condensed motive into its widest emotional significance" (iv. 174).

That is the case in its most general outlines. For the rest we must bear in mind that individualization on the part of the word-poet must, for the sake of the musician, not lie in emphasizing fortuitous circumstances or personal idiosyncrasies, as is so often the case in the spoken drama, but must be achieved by the method of *artistic cognition*, of which we spoke in the first half of this section, and in which, as Schopenhauer explains, the mere phenomenal relations gradually fall away and the "very own being" comes into view. Herewith the individual himself, in works of this species, receives a high symbolical meaning, a meaning extending far beyond the single details.

Rousseau was the first to lay down the rule for the word-tone-drama: "few and simple ideas." The great law of simplification here rules supreme. The responsible agent of its operation is the word-poet. He simplifies, as has already been

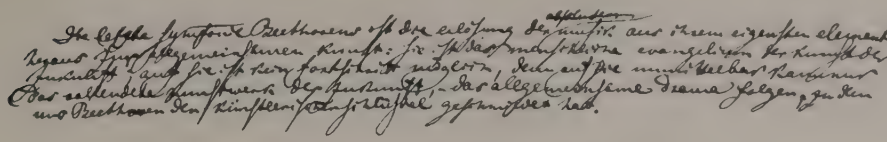
said, by concentrating all the motives into one point; he simplifies by removing all conventional, historical, fortuitous elements; he simplifies by reducing the characters to their original, their true outlines. But he also simplifies the details, especially in his employment of language. "He must reduce the number of unimportant connecting and explaining words, such as we find in the complicated sentences of ordinary literature"; he must "separate from the language all those elements which mark it as an organ of the understanding, and unfit it for engaging the feelings, condense its substance to its purely human essence, that which is intelligible to the feelings" (iv. 152, 159). That is the deep meaning of the often quoted, and shamefully misunderstood sentence of Wagner: "In truth the greatness of the poet is best measured by that on which he keeps silence." But in keeping silence he calls to the musician: "Spread your melody boldly; let it flow as a continual stream through the whole work; say in it that which I pass over in silence, because you alone can say it, and silently I will say all, leading you by the hand" (vii. 172).

"The musician it is who causes this silence to sound forth," the musician, to whom the poet on his part "has provided in the word-melody exactly that which the musician cannot express" (iv. 217). Once more I must cite the prophetic seer of the new drama, E. T. A. Hoffman, who says: "That is just the wonderful secret of music, that exactly at the point where our poor language fails, it opens out an inexhaustible fund of expression." Wagner says the same in *Oper und Drama:* "Music, as a purely emotional organ, expresses just that which ordinary language cannot express, what we have called from our standpoint of the understanding the *unspeakable*" (iv. 218). Music therefore teaches us "*a new language*, in which that which is boundless can express itself with a certainty impossible to be misunderstood" (x. 320). This language has been developed and practised by the masters of absolute music, especially the great symphonists, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven,[1] until fully at home in the management of its own means. "Itself a pure organ of expression, it had to commit the error of imagining that it could explicitly determine the thing to be expressed"; in no other way could it have become "the mighty instrument of expression which it now is" (iii. 290). And to-day "we stand before the symphony of Beethoven as before the beginning of a completely new period of the history of art; for with it a phenomenon has appeared in the world nothing approaching to which can be shown by the art of any epoch or of any people" (vii. 148). Beethoven's last symphony is "the gospel of the art of the future" (iii. 115).

Although Richard Wagner's word-tone-drama is certainly related to the Greek tragedy, that is, in so far as the latter was the work of a true "community," and also more especially as it was an endeavour for purely human art,

[1] "From the great Beethoven a completely new perception of the nature of music was to be gained; the root from which it grew to this height and importance can be traced through Bach to Palestrina, whereby a very different foundation is obtained for æsthetic judgment than by considering the development of music in a direction far removed from these masters." (viii. 317.)

it is a great and a very common mistake to regard Wagner's drama as an attempted revival of the antique. The Italian *Dramma per Musica*, together with its French offshoots and its splendid blossom in Gluck's last works, was



Facsimile.[1] From the original MS. (iii. 115).

admittedly such a revival; Wagner's art is *not*. On the contrary it rests upon the very last achievements of the last art which attained maturity, music. Beethoven was the first who by his "bold labours" raised the power of musical expression "to the same height with that of poetry and painting in the great periods of the past" (viii. 209); not till now therefore, in the nineteenth century, are all the technical requirements fulfilled, which make it possible for the new drama to come into existence.

That this extraordinary development of music, just at a time when all other arts were at a stand-still, is not accidental, requires no proof. Wagner says: "The metaphysical necessity of this new language being found just in our times must be sought in the increasing conventionalism of modern language. . . . It is as if the purely human feeling had been enhanced by the pressure of conventional civilization, and had sought an outlet for its own peculiar laws of speech by which it might express itself intelligibly, and without the constraint of logical thought"[2] (vii. 149, 150). The composer, so strengthened, must, if he does not wish to squander his capabilities, follow the counsel of Schiller, and "leave the domain of caprice to enter that of necessity, where he may safely stand beside the poet, who makes the inner man his object."[3] Absolute music is "the domain of caprice," and therefore it is, as Wagner so truly says, "wanting in moral will." In this want of moral will lies the weakness which has been noticed in music by so many thinkers, and has led them to undervalue the "divine art." Through the drama, and with the assistance of the poet, music receives a moral will; it enters the domain of necessity, which, as Kant and Schiller have shown, is also

[1] "Beethoven's last symphony is the release of music from its own proper element to become universal art. It is the human gospel of the art of the future. From it no progress is possible; for nothing can follow directly upon it but the universal drama, for which Beethoven has forged the artistic key."

[2] "Die metaphysische Notwendigkeit der Auffindung dieses ganz neuen Sprachvermögens gerade in unseren Zeiten liegt in der immer konventionelleren Ausbildung der modernen Wortsprache. . . . Es ist, als ob das durch die Kompression seitens der konventionellen Zivilisation gesteigerte rein menschliche Gefühl sich einen Ausweg zur Geltendmachung seiner ihm eigentümlichen Sprachgesetze gesucht hätte, durch welche es, frei vom Zwange der logischen Denkgesetze, sich selbst verständlich sich ausdrücken könnte."

[3] *Über Matthison's Gedichte.*

the only realm of true freedom. Now the poet calls to the musician: "Plunge fearlessly into the full waves of the sea of music; hand in hand with me you can never lose touch with that which is most intelligible to every man; for with me you will always stand on the soil of dramatic action, and this action, at the moment of scenic representation, is the most immediately intelligible of all poems" (vii. 171).

It must not be supposed that this relation of mutual dependence between language and music means a hindrance to both. The contrary is true, although indeed certain beauties which are quite in their proper place in the single arts will here disappear as purposeless and irrelevant.[1] On the other hand, through the coöperation of music "the breath of poetry will be swelled to a fulness unknown before" (iii. 185), and the poet has scope for bold deeds which he would never have ventured on alone.[2] And for music the poetical verse, with its endless diversity, is a never-failing source "from which the purely musical capacities of men may be fertilized" (iv. 158).

Position of the other arts in the word-tone-drama.

But not only do poetry and music work together in the musical drama, we also have pantomime, plastic art ("changed from stone into the flesh and blood of man"), painting, etc.

The most important thing is that each single artistic element has to be just that which by its nature it can be. "Only where a species of art is necessary, indispensable, is it also entirely what it is, can be, and ought to be. . . . That which it cannot be the other art is for it; there is no egoistic borrowing from each other" (iii. 91, 92). It has often been supposed that the arts must in this case mutually cripple each other, but this is certainly wrong. For Goethe's words: "In constraint the master shows himself," are generally true, and here, where several arts coöperate organically together, the restraints are not arbitrary, as are for instance the laws of form of absolute music; they are living. An art which confines itself to its own proper province can only grow stronger.

Wagner speaks of the "changeful play" of the arts which goes on in the drama in a very fine passage in *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft:* "So, completing each other in changeful play, the sister arts will disport themselves together, in pairs or singly, as is required by the dramatic action, which alone prescribes the measure and intention. Now the plastic movements of the actors pause to follow the passionless musing of the thought,—now the thought comes forth to life, and finds direct form in the gesture; now the stream of feeling, the thrill of wonder, will be rendered by music alone; now all three in common embrace will carry out the will of the drama in direct and puissant action. For there is but one thing which all the arts here united must desire, if they would freely exert

[1] For this reason, we may remark *en passant*, it never does to dissect Wagner's works into words and music, and then to judge of each by the measure of these individual arts. The finest inspirations will be lost by such a proceeding.

[2] *Le Drame Wagnérien*, H. S. Chamberlain, p. 130, *et suiv.*

their powers, that is, *the drama;* their only concern must be to fulfil its intention. If they are conscious of their purpose, and direct all their efforts to its fulfilment, they will have strength to cut away the egoistic offshoots of their own special being, and the tree will grow, not sideways to a ragged deformity, but upwards, spreading its branches, leaves and twigs proudly aloft to its crown" (iii. 187).

Here, as everywhere, the main point is that "the dramatic action alone prescribes measure and intention." The dramatic intention even determines "the figure, manner, attitude, movement, and costume of the actor, down to every detail" (iv. 223). One very important circumstance has however never yet received attention, namely that the determination of every detail is only possible through the coöperation of music. Here too the extraordinary significance of the word-tone-drama appears.

Goethe indeed, in *Wilhelm Meister*, spoke of the advantage which the drama with music enjoyed in that declamation, measure, expression, movements are prescribed for the actor by the poet, whereas in the recited drama he has to invent everything, "in which besides he may be disturbed by any of the others who are acting with him." The relation here alluded to by Goethe is that referred to by Wagner when he talks of "the transmigration of the soul of the poet into the body of the actor" (ix. 181). Lately however one artist who has assimilated the idea of the new drama in a way that few have done has shown in detail that the music everywhere determines, not only the time, *i.e.* the mathematical duration, but therewith *implicite*, also the space, *i.e.* all the relations of the stage picture. "There now remains nothing for the actor to create in his part; the poet supplies that ready made, and he gives it the breath of life; the actor has no *rights* over it; his highest task is entire renunciation, to receive through the agency of music the new soul which the creative poet urges upon him, and allow it to obtain complete dominion over him."[1] Music therefore appears as the ruling, or to speak more correctly, the law-giving art; in it the will of the dramatist expresses itself most directly.

[1] A. Appia: *La Mise-en-scène du Drame Wagnérien* (Paris, Chailley, 1895). Unfortunately it is not possible for me here fully to discuss the principal thesis of this work, namely that in the new drama the whole principle of the stage scenery must undergo a complete alteration; Wagner indeed foresaw this, but did not particularize it in detail. The *Meister* says that "music resolves the rigid, immovable groundwork of the scenery into a liquid, yielding, ethereal surface, capable of receiving impressions"; but, to prevent a painful conflict between what is seen and what is heard, the stage-picture too must be released from the curse of rigidity which now rests upon it. The only way of doing this is by managing the *light* in a manner which its importance deserves, that its office may no longer be confined to illuminating painted walls. Apollo was not only the god of song, but also of light. To unite music of endless mobility to an immovable stage-picture can only produce a jarring discord; but through the inexhaustible power of light the immovable will receive life. M. Appia indicates with the aid of his professional experience the technical contrivances which this new art will require, and his work has real creative value, being at the same time theoretical and practical. A detailed work of the same author—*La Musique et la Mise-en-scène*—is expected shortly. I call special attention to it because I am convinced that the next great advance in the drama will be of this nature, in the art of the eye, and not in music.

The new idea of dramatic action.

One very important subject in connection with the doctrine of the purely human drama is that of the new conception of dramatic *action* required by the addition of music. The only general rule which can be given is that, as the subject-matter is purely human (not historical or conventional), so, too, must the action be *purely human.* The practical effect of this strict limitation, and especially of the coöperation of music, which can only render the inner nature, never the outward features, is to lay the source of the dramatic action more within, more in the heart of the actor than could be done in the earlier drama. Outer circumstances will then be of secondary importance.

To attempt to define this more particularly in theory would be to incur the risk of laying down imaginary limits for the endless variety of the dramatic form. This is what happened to Wagner himself in his work *Oper und Drama.* He then had the *Nibelungen* before his mind, and laid down certain limitations, *e.g.* the abolition of choruses and of rhyme, which he thought were absolutely prescribed by the nature of the word-tone-drama; his own later works prove that this is not so. Much also which he says regarding the employment of legend and myth might easily be misunderstood. We must therefore observe the greatest caution; above all we must impress upon our minds the great principle which Wagner has himself illustrated so admirably in his own works: "the form of the drama must be always changing and always new" (iv. 245). It will however be better to consider the new conception of dramatic action by practical examples, which his works offer us in abundance.[1]

Only one thing I must call attention to here; the concept of *action*, which certain dogmatic æstheticians would like to reduce to a formula "valid for all time" has always varied. Herder said truly: "A name which denotes very different things may often lead astray. Sophocles, Corneille, Shakespeare have, as tragic poets, only the name in common: the genius of their works is quite different." Wagner has created a new drama, the purely human word-tone-drama; we cannot but suppose that his genius again is different. It would be a ridiculous proceeding to deduce a standard for "action," for what is "suited to the stage," etc., from our knowledge of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Schiller, and then apply it to works which, to borrow Herder's expression, have only the name in common with the works of these poets. Or we can argue *a fortiori*, if Sophocles and Shakespeare have, as dramatic poets, only the name in common, if this supposed measure, "valid for all time," can only be obtained from them on very violent assumptions, how shall that which is law for them be at once applied to a drama, in which a new language, namely, modern music, "a language known at no previous time" (vii. 149), appears as a most important means of expression? Before Wagner had composed the great works of his second epoch, at a time

[1] *Cf.* chap. iii. To complete what is here merely indicated regarding the relations between language and music and the new conception of dramatic action I would refer the reader to my small work, *Le drame Wagnérien*, where these two particular questions are considered historically, theoretically, and practically, by the light of Wagner's own development and by that of each of his works.

therefore when his words could only refer quite generally to the word-tone-drama which was then in his mind, and which he longed for, he wrote: "through the coöperation more particularly of *our* music with dramatic poetry, the drama may and must attain an importance never dreamed of before" (iii. 285). The laws of a new art-form must not be sought in the times when the possibility of this form was not dreamed of, but in the new works themselves. "Genius is the innate disposition through which Nature gives the rule for art" (Kant). From the works of genius, and not from theory, shall we learn what the *action* in the word-tone-drama must be like.

The art-work of the future.

But with this appeal to the living works of genius we find ourselves face to face with an important question, not easy to answer. Are we to view Wagner's works as actual and sufficient examples of the perfect drama, proclaimed in his writings? Numerous utterances of his can be quoted against such a view.

In the first part of this section I considered Wagner's doctrine, that only general art is highest art, in some detail. We need therefore scarcely feel surprised at his repeated asseverations that the perfect drama, such as he dreams of, is not as yet possible. In *Oper und Drama* for instance he writes (iv. 261): "Nobody can be more conscious than myself that the conditions essential for the realization of the drama, as I intend it, could never exist either in the will or even in the capacity of any single individual, were these immeasurably greater than my own; they can only be found in a communal spirit, and consequent community of action, the very reverse of what we find at the present day." He there concludes that this drama "cannot now possibly come into existence," and continues: "supposing such a work were really produced, then we should more than ever become aware that the one factor which makes it possible, the desire of the public, and the mighty coöperation which springs from that desire, were wanting" (iv. 279). One might perhaps suppose him to be merely referring to the impossibility of adequate performances. "The realization of the drama as I intend it" may mean its composition, or it may mean its realization on the stage. But a year and a quarter afterwards, in May 1852, when he was working diligently at his *Nibelungen*, he wrote to Uhlig: "*À propos!* do protest against its being said that I am working at the art of the future; tell the silly people to learn to read before they write" (U., 193). And before this he had declared categorically to the same friend: "The art-work cannot now be created, but only prepared" (U., 21).

One thing at least is certain, that we must consider Wagner's art-doctrine, both general and special (*i.e.* the doctrine of the purely human drama), quite independently of his own works. The entire art-doctrine forms, as the reader will have noticed, an organic part of Wagner's philosophy. Only through his art-doctrine do his political and philosophical views become intelligible, and it was so interwoven and incorporated with his ideas on regeneration that the two really cannot be separated from one another, though we have been obliged to separate them for the purposes of our exposition. Not only the general art-

doctrine, but also that of the purely human art-work, are necessary parts of his artistic philosophy. Everywhere, in every department, Wagner returns to the purely human, the eternally natural. In his first work he speaks of "the purpose of Nature, the only right purpose"; in the last letter before his death he indicates as his object "the harmonious conformity of the purely human with the eternally natural." In politics his bent is so purely *human* that he cannot be reckoned to any party, nor to any class of interests; in philosophy he is an ardent disciple of the great thinker Schopenhauer; but beneath the clear head there beats a purely human heart; with little concern for logic he piles optimism upon pessimism, affirmation on negation of the will; in religion he praises the Christian dogma because "it appeals to purely human nature" (x. 58). The completion of the regeneration which he longs for is the triumph of the purely human principle; but without art it can neither come into being nor endure, and how should its highest art be other than purely human?

With his works themselves we enter a different region. Here his genius rules and creates absolutely. But nobody has insisted more than Wagner upon the fact that the real creative element in artistic work is the necessary, the *spontaneous*, the *unconscious*. Wagner's doctrines may indeed be regarded as the outcome of his art, and he himself declares that he would never have found the most important factors for the construction (*i.e.* the doctrine) of the art-work of the future, if he had not first as artist stumbled upon them quite unconsciously (U., 80): but this does not mean that we are justified in making assumptions in direct opposition to Wagner's words. He speaks at the close of *Oper und Drama* of "the prophetically determining work of the longing artist of the present," and of this work he says: "In the life of the future the art-work will be what to-day it can only long to be, and not really be." Herewith he has defined the position of his own works between the present and the future; his own position, as a creative artist, is indicated in another place, where he writes: "Only in solitude can the individual convert the bitterness of this admission (the impossibility of at present realizing the perfect drama) in himself to an intoxicating sweetness, driving him with drunken joy to his task of making the impossible possible" (iv. 261).

In view of the *Ring*, *Tristan*, *Parsifal*, and *die Meistersinger*, we may indeed admit that Wagner has made the impossible possible. We can as yet have no conception of the dramatic work which is to issue from true community, except through our knowledge of Wagner's works, in which and by which the life of the future is prophetically determined.

The German drama.

In conclusion I would invite attention to the fact that this "solitary" *Meister* was not without that "community" which he himself assures us alone imparts strength for invention.

In one place he says that whoever shares his view of the regeneration of the human race lives in common with the human race of the future. But as artist, as creator of a new and perfect dramatic form, Wagner lived in community with

the greatest word-poets and tone-poets of the past, and more especially in community with the artistic spirit of the entire German people. Wagner's greatness is that he does not appear as an accident of history, as an arbitrarily creating genius, but as the slowly matured product of the artistic development of the German mind, and, as such, exactly conditioned and determined. Wagner's drama is "the only modern purely human art-form of the German genius fully answering to it, created by it, and originally belonging to it, which is yet wanting to the modern world, as distinguished from the world of the ancients" (ix. 135). It is the work and the property of the greatest German poets and of the loftiest German musicians: in their name, and at their command did Wagner speak and create.

All the greatest German musicians were essentially dramatic; even in Orlando di Lasso we are struck with the short, concise, sharply-defined motives, when we compare him with the Italian composers of his time.[1] No one who knows Bach's Passions and his great Mass will dispute his immense dramatic gift, or the bold recklessness with which, in purely musical works, he emphasizes the dramatic accent. The same is true of Handel, and may even be observed in Haydn. It was a German, Gluck, who produced on the false basis of the Italian *Dramma per Musica*, all the dramatic truth which it was possible to obtain from it. Mozart, "the greatest and divinest genius" (to borrow Wagner's words), was inspired to his greatest achievements by the stage, and knew how to make immortal dramatic works out of the most miserable *libretti*, and in spite of the odious cabals of singers, which called forth bitter laments from him; Beethoven can only be understood as a dramatic poet. With these musicians we have an impression as if they had never fully realized that something was wanting in them, and what it was. This may be the consequence of their deficient education, and their position as executant virtuosi, but it was quite otherwise with the poets. I have already quoted Wieland, Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Herder, Kleist, and Hoffmann; were this a historical treatise, I might increase the list of those who foretold the word-tone-drama very considerably, but I have purposely confined myself to the more important names. It merely remains for me to remark that among these great men there were many who distinctly foresaw that the art-work needed would not be achieved by combinations and arguments, but by the appearance of an extraordinary genius,

Richard Wagner, London, 1877

[1] Ambros., *Geschichte der Musik*, v. 56.

equally gifted as musician and poet. Jean Paul wrote: "We wait for *the man* who shall write both the words and the music of a true opera," and with still more penetration did Herder wait for the man: "who will upset the whole abode of scrappy operatic sing-song, and erect an Odeum, a complete lyric building, in which poetry, music, action, and scenery are one."

Wagner therefore does not stand alone. The fact that he was misunderstood by the German people, that even at the present day he receives from the great majority of educated people of his nation neither the consideration which he deserves, nor the admiration and reverence due to his mighty genius, does not alter the fact that he, the latest of Germany's truly great ones, supplied the bond between the musician and the poet, the two who had so long been striving in opposition to each other, by creating the new dramatic form, the truest and proudest title of which would be—*The German Drama.*

We speak of the Greek drama, the English, the French, the Spanish drama, and with these names we indicate, not only the nationality of the author, but a definite dramatic form by which each is distinguished. Henceforward we may fairly speak of a German drama; it is that which Wagner taught, the purely human, word-tone-drama. As it has proceeded out of the German spirit, and has taken form in the immortal creations of a noble German poet "wedded to music," this living, expressive title is preferable to one derived from philosophical theory.

How this *German drama* gradually freed itself from the swaddling clothes of the foreign opera, and grew in the direct course of a single short life to glorious independent power, will be shown in the next chapter.

Appendix

Summary of Richard Wagner's Writings

WAGNER'S writings and poems have been published in ten volumes. (E. W. Fritzsch, 1871-83; popular edition, 1890). After his death another volume, *Entwürfe, Gedanken, Fragmente* (Breitkopf und Härtel, 1885) was published, and soon afterwards the complete sketch of the drama *Jesus von Nazareth* (B. and H., 1887). In addition to these the sketch for *Die Sarazenin*, and certain essays and fragments from an earlier time have been printed in the *Bayreuther Blätter*.[1]

If we exclude the twenty-five poetical works (Dramas, Sketches, and Poems) there remain one hundred and nine prose writings.

Other sources for the knowledge of Richard Wagner's views are the numerous thoughts contained in the volume already mentioned (*Entwürfe*, etc.) and about five hundred published letters. Of these, the most important are: two hundred addressed to Liszt (B. and H., 1887), one hundred and seventy five to Uhlig, Fischer, and Heine (B. and H., 1888), and twelve to Roeckel (1894).

Unpublished as yet are: a detailed autobiography and many hundreds of letters.[2]

It is certainly very desirable to obtain a convenient survey of this extensive incidental work of the great dramatist. The whole of Wagner's artistic work, the whole of his life, indeed, can be referred back to a very simple expression, to a "formula." His drama is, as we have seen, the first endeavour on principle to represent the purely human freed from all conventionality; this endeavour led Wagner everywhere—in the state, in religion, in society,—to seek for the purely human, "the fresh water of Nature" which heals all our sufferings; the artist imperceptibly became the sage.

Now this artist, wishing to represent the purely human, *must*, as a thinking individual, as philosopher or as "seer," contemplate everything human; for we are born in a world of conventionality and of endless limitation, from which we can only be released by thought. The purely human element of our thought, again, can only be represented in art. The *artist* Wagner could never have comprehended the object of his longing without the help of the *thinker* Wagner; the thinker could not have seen or have shown

[1] Latterly several letters and articles written for German papers in the years of his sorest distress in Paris, 1839 to 1842, have again been brought to light, although they were intentionally excluded by Wagner himself from his collected works because of their "trifling character," and because their purpose was "to obtain funds by writing amusing articles for various German newspapers" (i. 240). Many articles too which appeared in periodicals in later years the *Meister* refused to include in his collected works. In such matters one may well trust the author's own judgment; it is not necessary to swell the number of documents by things on which he himself laid no value.

[2] Many projects of the year 1850 remained unexecuted because they had been rendered unnecessary by other works. *Das Künstlerthum der Zukunft*, *Die Erlösung des Genies*, *Das Monumentale*, *Die Unschönheit der Zivilisation*, and others. Whilst the German edition of this work was in the press there appeared *Nachgelassene Schriften und Dichtungen von Richard Wagner* (Leipzig, B. and H.).

to others what he had dimly comprehended without the artist. The one undivisible activity of Wagner's life expressed itself therefore necessarily in two different directions; the task was to *find* the purely human and to *represent* it, this is the formula of which I spoke.

But as this highest art-work never grows out of the will of an individual, but only from that of a community, Wagner had to try and awaken this will, to find and to represent the purely human, in others.

Wagner's writings show this double tendency; on the one hand, they treat of the conditions for representing the purely human in art; on the other, they seek out and demonstrate the purely human treasure beneath the rubbish in which it is hidden in every department of our lives. In most of his works both tendencies are evident enough; but if, for the purpose of classification, we choose merely to consider the immediate subject of each work, we may divide the entire body into two principal series; one portion of his writings deals with the discovery of the purely human in life, the other with its representation in art.

The latter class of works exceed the former very considerably, as is natural, both in number and in bulk. It must also be explained that many of the works which deal strictly with art wander far away from the main problem, and treat of special subjects connected with music or stage technique, independently of the dramatic idea.

We counted altogether one hundred and nine prose works. From these, twenty-three must be excluded, namely, the introductions to the single volumes of the complete edition which, as mere formal communications, scarcely possess the value of independent works; and further, criticisms relating to W. H. Riehl, Ferdinand Hiller, Eduard Devrient, etc., which are of such a directly personal and controversial character that they scarcely harmonize with the rest. The remaining eighty-six consist of two principal groups.

I. Nineteen treating of life.
II. Sixty-seven treating of art.

The nineteen which treat of life are—

1. Die Wibelungen (Weltgeschichte aus der Sage), 1848.
2. Das Judenthum in der Musik, 1850.
3. Staat und Religion, 1864.
4. Deutsche Kunst und Deutsche Politik, 1865.
5. Aufklärungen über das Judenthum in der Musik, 1869.
6. Brief an Friedrich Nietzsche (on German education), 1872.
7. Was ist Deutsch?, 1878.
8. Modern, 1878.
9. Publikum und Popularität, 1878.
10. Das Publikum in Zeit und Raum, 1878.
11. Wollen wir hoffen?, 1879.
12. Offenes Schreiben an Herrn Ernst v. Weber (against vivisection), 1879.
13. Religion und Kunst, 1880.
14. Was nützt diese Erkenntnis, 1880.
15. Erkenne dich selbst, 1881.
16. Introduction to Comte Gobineau's Ein Urtheil über die jetzige *Weltlage*, 1881.
17. Heldenthum und Christenthum, 1881.
18. Brief an Heinrich v. Stein, 1883.
19. Über das Weibliche im Menschlichen, 1883. (Fragment.)

The sixty-seven which treat of art may, for the sake of clearness, be conveniently divided into several groups—

a.) 21 On the new dramatic ideal.
b.) 6 On stage reform and stage technique.
c.) 5 On his own artistic career.
d.) 11 Explanations of his own works.
e.) 8 Explanations of works of other masters.
f.) 5 On the lives of other artists.
g.) 11 The Paris writings of 1840-1841.[1]

a.) Twenty-one works treating especially of the purely human drama—

1. Die Kunst und die Revolution, 1849.
2. Das Künstlerthum der Zukunft, 1849. (Fragment.)
3. Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft, 1849.
4. Kunst und Klima, 1850.
5. Oper und Drama, 1851.
6. Über die Goethestiftung, 1851.
7. Über Musikalische Kritik, 1852.
8. Brief an Hector Berlioz, 1860.
9. "Zukunftsmusik," 1860.
10. Dedication of the second edition of *Oper und Drama*, 1863.
11. Über das Dirigiren, 1869.
12. Beethoven, 1870.
13. Über die Bestimmung der Oper, 1871.
14. Über Schauspieler und Sänger, 1872.
15. Brief über das Schauspieler-Wesen, 1872.
16. Über die Benennung "Musikdrama," 1872.
17. Einleitung zu einer Vorlesung der Götterdämmerung, 1873.
18. Ein Einblick in das heutige deutsche Opernwesen, 1873.
19. Über das Dichten und Komponieren, 1879.
20. Über das Operndichten und Komponieren im besonderem, 1879.
21. Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama, 1879.

The titles show that some of these, *e.g.* the three last and *Über das Dirigiren*, are almost exclusively musical; others relate to the stage. Every arrangement in groups must be to some extent artificial; its justification will be found in the entire scheme, not in single details.

b.) Very nearly related to the last are the works which treat of stage reform and the technical education of artists for the stage—

1. Entwurf zur Organisation eines deutschen Nationaltheaters für das Königreich Sachsen, 1848.
2. Ein Theater in Zurich, 1851.
3. Das Wiener Hofoperntheater, 1863.
4. Bericht über eine in München zu errichtende Deutsche Musikschule, 1865.
5. Das Bühnenfestspielhaus zu Bayreuth, 1873.
6. Entwurf (relating to the Bayreuth school for the stage), 1877.

c.) The works in which Wagner has given us accounts of his own artistic career are nearly related to the first principal group. Especially *Eine Mittheilung an meine*

[1] This little group distinctly belongs here, and is closely connected with *a.*), *c.*), and *e.*).

Freunde is one of the principal sources for our knowledge of the doctrine of the purely human drama—

1. Das Liebesverbot. Account of a first performance, 1836.
2. Autobiographical Sketch, 1842.
3. Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde, 1851.
4. Epilogischer Bericht (account of Der Ring des Nibelungen), 1863.
5. Schlussbericht (on the same), 1873.

d.) The following are to explain his own works or their performance; there are eleven—

1. Über die Aufführung des Tannhäuser, 1852.
2. Bemerkungen zur Aufführung des Fliegenden Holländers, 1852.
3, 4, and 5. Programmatische Erläuterungen: — Ouvertüren zum Fliegenden Holländer, zu Tannhäuser und Lohengrin, 1853.[1]
6. Ein Rückblick auf die Festspiele des Jahres, 1876, 1878.
7. Das Bühnenweihfestspiel in Bayreuth, 1882.
8. Bericht über die Wiederaufführung eines Jugendwerkes (C-minor symphony), 1882.
9. Zum Vorspiel von Tristan und Isolde (posthumous).
10. Zum Vorspiel von Akt iii. der Meistersinger (posthumous).
11. Zum Vorspiel von Parsifal (posthumous).

e.) Eight works are to explain compositions of other masters or their performance—

1. Bericht über die Aufführung der ix. Symphonie von Beethoven nebst Programm dazu, 1846.[2]
2. Programmatische Erläuterung zur Heroischen Symphonie, 1852.
3. Programmatische Erläuterung zur Coriolan Ouverture, 1852.
4. Gluck's Ouverture zu Iphigenia in Aulis, 1854.
5. Über Franz Liszt's Symphonische Dichtungen, 1857.
6. Zum Vortrag der ix. Symphonie Beethoven's, 1873.
7. Über Eine Aufführung von Spohr's Jessonda, 1874.
8. Programmatische Erläuterung zu Beethoven's Cis-moll-quartett (posthumous).

f.) Five works contain reminiscences of six great artists—

1. Erinnerungen an Spontini, 1851.
2. Nachruf an L. Spohr und Chordirector W. Fischer, 1860.
3. Meine Erinnerungen an Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1868.
4. Eine Erinnerung an Rossini, 1868.
5. Erinnerungen an Auber, 1871.

g.) The following eleven were written in Paris in 1840-41—

1. Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven.
2. Ein Ende in Paris.

[1] These three programmes were written on the occasion of the great Wagner concerts in Zurich in 1853.

[2] It is worthy of special mention that Wagner in 1841 seriously contemplated writing a large biography of Beethoven. Very extensive material had been placed at his disposal by his friend the librarian Anders. The project seems to have come to nothing owing to the want of enterprise of the publisher.

3. Ein glücklicher Abend.
4. Über Deutsches Musikwesen.
5. Der Virtuos und der Künstler.
6. Der Künstler und die Oeffentlichkeit.
7. Rossini's *Stabat Mater*.[1]
8. Über die Ouvertüre.
9. *Der Freischütz*, an das Pariser Publikum.
10. *Le Freischütz*, Bericht nach Deutschland.
11. Bericht über Halévy's *La reine de Chypre*.

I must again observe that a *Catalogue raisonné* of this kind has only relative value; it is more especially for the memory and as a guide. Just those works which treat of the discovery of the purely human kernel of life, such as for instance *Staat und Religion*, contain the deepest thoughts on art, and again we should know little about Wagner's political and social ideas, if the Zurich works on art, *Oper und Drama*, etc., had not been written. Biographical matter and hints for the performance of his own works and those of others are found scattered throughout his writings. Still a careful consideration of these tables will afford many a stimulating insight into the inner course of Wagner's life. It is a very risky proceeding to attempt to be too systematic in such matters, to try and infer laws of development from phenomena. Who shall say how much allowance is to be made for the demon *chance* in Wagner's life? And who is safe from the tricks of the demon of symmetry against which Goethe warned us in his *Leben und Verdienste des Doctor Joachim Jungius?* I for my part am satisfied with having brought the facts visibly before my readers.

[1] The first seven of these make up the set *Ein deutscher Musiker in Paris, Novellen und Aufsätze;* they first appeared in a French translation in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris.*

Third Chapter

Richard Wagner's Art-Works

> Ask yourselves, ye races of men that now live! Was this written for you? Have you courage with your hands to point to the stars of this Heaven of beauty and goodness and to say: it is *our* life which Wagner has placed among the stars?
>
> NIETZSCHE.

F. v Lenbach pinx. 1874 Photogravure Bruckmann

Introduction

> It follows from all that I have said that the concept, useful as it may be for life, valuable and necessary as it is for science, is sterile for art. The true and only source of every genuine work of art is the idea.
>
> SCHOPENHAUER.

The works of genius.

IT was with intentional irony that I asked at the close of the last chapter whether Wagner's works could be accepted as valid examples of the perfect drama which he taught. A paradox best shows how vain and meaningless all critical systems and comparative estimates become, directly we are confronted with a living work. Is Shakespeare an *advance* upon Sophocles? or Wagner upon Shakespeare? Who does not feel the idleness of such questions? Great artists, the true geniuses of mankind, join hands over the centuries, and form a single family. For genius consists in the union of excessive receptivity with a sovereign command over the technical apparatus; out of this union spring works which we call perfect, not because they conform to any theoretical standard of absolute beauty, not because they dispose over a greater or less number of means of expression, but because there is complete harmony between the works and the object which they wish to attain, between the feeling and its expression; that is indeed something absolute, not relative. Schopenhauer remarks very aptly of genial art that it is everywhere at its goal. It matters little how we seek to account for the man of genius; we may, with Carlyle, regard him as a being differently constituted to the rest of mankind, as having, so to speak,

wandered to our planet from another world; or we may adopt Wagner's very comforting assurance[1] and suppose genius to be a creative power, claiming the entire human race as its own, and able, under social conditions different to ours at the present day, to produce a universal expression of inconceivable force, such as now only issues from individuals; certain it is that the works of genius form a class quite apart and incomparable, to be studied just as we study the phenomena of nature. With such works criticism, using the word in its ordinary restricted sense, loses its meaning; it has no standard for comparison, either for praise or for blame. Kant says: "Through genius nature prescribes the rule for art"; we learn the rules in the works of genius, and we can only measure genius by itself. It is always interesting to compare the great works of different epochs and nations together, but only with reference to the means employed to attain harmony between the feeling and its expression.

In considering the works of genius we must then lay aside ordinary criticism, and use our critical judgment to bring out what is distinctive and incomparable in them, so as to learn their lesson, bearing in mind Goethe's words: "What genius has done we can see; who will say what it could or should do?" This is the obvious course of a wise man, but nowadays it is called servile adulation; although no very great degree of adulation is necessary to see that Wagner knew better how to write his *Tristan* than did any of the numerous gentlemen who undertook to show him; it would seem to me the minimum of understanding which one may presume every thinking being to possess. At least the way was led by one who possessed a maximum of critical ability—Aristotle. The great thinker stands up vigorously for the works of artistic genius against the censoriousness of critics and writers on the drama, already rampant in his day. Every one of his famous and much-abused rules has been drawn *from* the drama —not *vice versâ*. This is precisely what Richard Wagner does in his writings; he does not busy himself with abstract theories; everything is drawn from living art itself; he says of his theoretical writings: "they are not speculative; they merely represent things as they are, and in their relations to each other" (U., 188). Such examples may safely be followed when we are speaking of Wagner's own works.

A deep insight into the nature of this new art, the word-tone-drama, can only be gained by carefully following the course of Wagner's development, and by loving study of the works of his maturity. Critical acumen will be very useful; but it must be constructive, not destructive.

At the very beginning, however, we meet with serious difficulties. External circumstances often interfere to prevent the clear and certain recognition of the inner process of the artist's development; accidents of fortune, want, and the pressure of circumstances exert an important influence upon life, and if we follow the details too minutely we run the risk of obscuring essentials with things of minor importance. One need only read Jahn's classical Life of Mozart to see

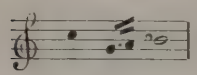
[1] See page 196.

how many things which are admired by an uncritical world of critics arose from the master's necessity, and were not approved by his better judgment. With Wagner the freedom of his creative genius from external constraint is simply unparalleled; from the time of *Tannhäuser* we may say that external circumstances exerted not the slightest influence upon the artistic form, and in this respect his development is easier to follow than that of any other artist known to us. But the dæmon of Socrates could only warn, and so too did Wagner's dæmon prevent him from accepting any compromises or doing violence to his artistic convictions; still there are serious breaks, marking what he did *not* produce, because he was prevented by his ceaseless conflicts with a hostile world. Caution must therefore be observed, unless we wish to gain quite a false picture of the course of Wagner's development. Nor is the study of his works itself free from danger. Strictly, works of art should only be seen and heard—*experienced*, not spoken about; in this every true artist will agree with me. The work of genius can only be likened to revelation; its secret can never be fathomed, and it requires great judgment to find out what can profitably be discussed. One step too near, and the delicate bloom is destroyed; there remains only an anatomical skeleton: "Anyone who could speak aloud and openly about the secret," says Wagner, "must have understood very little of it." And about the *lessons* which people are so anxious to draw from works of art he says: "We must keep strictly to the work itself and its impression upon us, which is quite individual; few enough are the rules of art to be extracted from it for universal application, and people who want to make much of them have in reality missed the principal point" (v. 251).

Musical interpretation.

Wagner's works are in more danger than any others of suffering from the irrepressible craze of the public for interpretation. Myth, legend, history, politics, sociology, philosophy, religion,—every science is ransacked to explain works which really require nothing for their comprehension but open senses and a receptive heart. I do not for a moment deny that the *savants*—mythologists, philologists, philosophers—might, every one of them, *learn* a great deal from Wagner's works; what I doubt is whether they can *teach* us anything at all, however slight, about them. Even the astonishment and admiration which studies of this kind awaken in us is by no means an unmixed gain for art; simple artistic receptivity will bring us much further.[1] Of course it is the music which has suffered most from the rage for interpretation. Music is not winged mathematics, any more than architecture is frozen music, as Goethe thought; still its form is arithmetical; the basis of its action lies in the movements of rigid bodies, and the temptation to the use—or rather abuse—of formulas becomes very great. The necessary form of music has, therefore, always been derived from the repeti-

[1] Those who are interested in such questions should above all things avoid dilettantism. For saga and mythology in Wagner the best authorities are: Prof. Golther, Doctor Meinck, and Wolzogen; for language, Wolzogen, Meinck, and Glasenapp (the philological works of the last named author are not yet published); for history and legend, Prof. Muncker, Golther, Hertz, etc.

tion of certain figures, generally more or less varied; music as an art combines figures of different characters together; they coalesce, undergo metamorphosis, are extended, simplified or resolved into their components, and again built up anew. And even now, after this manipulation of the musical material has been expanded by Beethoven and Wagner to an elastic, dramatic expression of unique force, our symphonies are still made up of themes, counter-themes and variations, differing in this respect in no way from a fugue of Bach. The first critics declaimed against Wagner's *formlessness*—just as they had once done with Beethoven; and the work of Liszt and other musicians, in proving his scores to be perfect marvels of finished *form*, was useful in its day. Of course, there could be no doubt about this among competent men, so the enemies of genius changed front, and now declared that with Wagner nothing came from the heart; he was a mathematical genius, operating with tones. The talk about a mathematical genius was, of course, just as silly as that about formlessness, and both have been given up long ago, but one thing still remains, namely, the mania for motives, a complaint which has caused many a one to lose the little artistic understanding that he possessed. And this mania degenerates more and more into formalism; the motives are no longer regarded as members of a definite symphonic body, or enumerated and named as such. All the works are considered together, and we are informed that a certain figure—first sinking, and then rising—is Wagner's "question-formula," and another, rising chromatically, is the "longing-formula," etc. At best, all this is what Beethoven called "musical skeletons." In his treatise *Ueber das Dichten und Komponieren* Wagner points out "how insignificant, how almost ludicrously unmeaning" is Beethoven's , when regarded as a mere *skeleton;* how then does it come to signify so much? Because Beethoven heard in these tones fate knocking at the door. And similarly, the reason why Wagner's motives are of such irresistible force is that they are not arbitrary inventions of music, but have been whispered to him by the forms of the poetic conception (see the fine passage, x. 226). The musical motives therefore deserve our closest attention; this I do not deny. They are a marvellous means of imparting both inward and outward unity to the work. But we must not overlook the fact that the motives are not the primary, original thing in the musical conception, but rather the final outflow of the poetic creative art itself. When a form of this kind is torn away from its surroundings, nothing is left but a formula; in itself such a phrase as is just as insignificant as Beethoven *g g g-e♭* from the C-minor symphony, for the motive acquires its significance *through* the drama. The musical motive springs, as Wagner has explained in *Oper und Drama*, out of the principal motives of the action; organically united with the action it is a blossom; without it a skeleton. The trained executive musician may study

the technique of the musical structure, where necessary for the interpretation; *he* is in no danger of becoming entangled in the mazes of theory; directly the actual performance begins the artist will assert himself, but we must guard against attributing to the *logical* analysis of music a value which it does not possess. It must always be borne in mind that Wagner never writes music to words, never *composes poems;* the whole symphonic construction of each of his dramas forms a poetic atmosphere, in which the drama has been born and has ripened to maturity; clothed in this atmosphere it goes forth into the world—where else it would be poisoned. One example may be given in illustration of what has been said.

Not until some years after *Lohengrin* had been completed did Wagner himself discover that he had employed certain musical phrases symphonically as motives (*cf.* U., 142). In the same way it seems to me that he who wishes to penetrate deeper into the secret of his works should start with the *general* impression of performances as nearly perfect as possible, arriving gradually at the secrets of inner structure. He will never cease to learn; the perfection of the form and wealth of beauties not dreamed of before will soon disclose themselves to his wondering gaze, and what he carries away will be a profound inner experience, not expressible in words.

Objects of this chapter.

In this chapter then I intend to sketch only the main outlines of Wagner's artistic development, and then to draw a few ideas from his dramas for the deeper comprehension of those glorious masterworks; even this would scarcely be necessary, did we not foresee that—probably for many years to come—they are likely to be treated as operas, to be performed in operatic theatres with the regular répertoire, and by the usual operatic singers. Whilst they continue to be disfigured in this way there may be some use in theoretical expositions. There is only one way really to know Wagner's works: that is to witness the performances in Bayreuth.

The chapter will be of more importance for the inner comprehension of Wagner's individuality. "Poetic work affords the best bond of connection with others," says Goethe, when speaking of the wondrousness of all individuality, and of the impossibility of communicating it (Letter to Schiller, March 3rd, 1799). And in truth Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan und Isolt* brings the picture of the unknown author much more vividly before the inner vision than could the most detailed description of his life; precisely the same is true of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. If some cataclysm were suddenly to destroy every source of information about Wagner's life, and we had nothing left but his art-works, we should know the great man better, his individuality would present itself more forcibly than now, when his figure is as completely hidden beneath historical documents as the Sphinx beneath the sand of the Egyptian desert. Without wishing to lay undue emphasis upon this the author may be allowed to say that in the following discussion he will be guided by the conviction that the artist's heart is best manifested in the creations of his fancy.

Works of the First Epoch

> The opera might be the greatest and most important of all dramatic forms, because it unites the powers of all the fine arts in itself; but it is just in the opera that modern frivolity shows itself, by the way in which all arts are degraded and brought into contempt.
>
> SULZER.

1. Youthful Attempts

The old and the new language.

WITH the natural talent which Wagner possessed, and the constant stimulus of the theatre before him, it is scarcely surprising that his own attempts to produce works of art began at an early age, and assumed very varied forms. A child is of course very much determined by the impressions which it receives, and one would scarcely be justified in drawing any profound inferences from the special character of Wagner's first productions, excepting that they indicate a mind of unusual receptivity, and that the imitative instinct possessed by all took with him the form of creation. Mozart and Beethoven would not have composed music as children if their parents had not been musicians. It is not likely that Wagner would have sketched tragedies after the model of the Greeks while sitting on the lower forms of the *Gymnasium* (*Autobiographische Skizze*, i. 8), if he had not grown up on the stage. But directly the impressions received by a boy begin to acquire variety, his own natural tendency shows itself. Wagner, as might

be expected from his decided and impulsive character, exhibits the direction of his genius at a very early age.

I have already observed in my first chapter that in his very first years at school Wagner displayed one talent in a remarkable degree—that for language. I intentionally say language, not languages, for the sequel showed very clearly that he possessed not the slightest facility for acquiring different languages, and that his enthusiasm was awakened, not so much by the formalism of modern comparative philology, as by his deep artistic perception of the living organism of language. Wagner then showed as a child an exceptional gift for *language*, but not for languages. That is indeed remarkable, and imparts a special significance to the fact, not so wonderful in itself, that he even then began to write poems and tragedies; for to his great receptivity for external impressions and his pronounced bent for creation there is added an extraordinary aptitude for learning the secrets of the most direct and most necessary means of expression. Here, in this circumstance, lies the proof of his undoubted genius, for here lies the germ of that harmony between feeling and expression of which I spoke in the Introduction. Many years later Wagner wrote, "the indispensable foundation of artistic expression is language" (iv. 262); in another place he says very truly, "language does not belong to us; we receive it ready-made from without" (v. 238); all who wish to gain command over this necessary foundation of artistic expression must conquer it for themselves, and the boy was very soon urged to it by his artistic instinct. He showed unmistakably that his endeavours were for *expression*, and that the teachers of the Dresden *Gymnasium* were gravely in error when they conceived that the young Wagner's remarkable aptitude for language showed a talent for philology; this was seen by the way in which he came to study music.

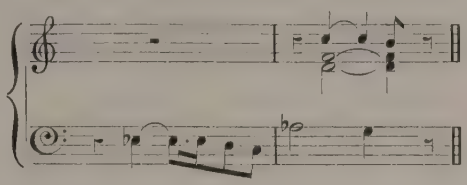
Wagner had indeed displayed a pronounced talent for music as a young child; though he had had little or no instruction, he played from ear and read from music. The technique of the piano, however, disgusted him, and no really deep interest in music was awakened until his sixteenth year, when his first great tragedy—made up of Hamlet and Lear—was completed. Here, too, of course, an external impression was decisive. The family moved from Dresden to Leipzig, where he heard symphonies for the first time: "Whilst I was finishing the great tragedy," Wagner writes, "I made my first acquaintance with Beethoven's music in the *Gewandhaus* concerts at Leipzig; its impression on me was immense. I also acquired an affection for Mozart, especially for his *Requiem*. Beethoven's music to *Egmont* inspired me to such a degree that nothing in the world would induce me to launch my tragedy—which was now finished—unless it were accompanied with such music. I never for a moment doubted my own ability to write the necessary music, only I thought it might be advisable to learn some of the principal rules of thorough bass, which I accordingly studied with much zeal. The studies did not bear fruit as quickly as I had expected, but I was captivated and spurred on by the difficulties.

I decided to become a musician" (i. 9). This incident teaches us much about Wagner's natural capacities. His interest in language had not sprung from any predilection for analytical philology; nor was he captivated by music as long as he only knew it as a play of beautiful forms, and was not struggling to find a mode of expression as poet. It was his experience of passionate dramatic music, uniting with his own longing desire to say more than it was possible to say in words, which drove him to learn how to wield the new means of expression. He was a poet who became a musician. In *Oper und Drama* we meet with passages which read like fragments of autobiography. After showing how our word-language became more and more conventional, less and less emotional, he continues: "In one sense we are not able to express our deepest emotions in this language, for we cannot employ it to invent in accordance with any emotion; we can only express them to the understanding, not to the infallible apprehension of the feelings; quite logically therefore the emotions have, at the present stage of our development, left the absolute language of the understanding, and taken refuge in the absolute language of feeling, modern music." Music is "the new language, the redeeming and realizing language, and in it alone will the poet finally be able to express his deepest intentions in the most convincing way" (iv. 122, 125). For Wagner then music is a *new language;* and he threw himself into it with the same zeal, and with the same success, as he had done with the *old language*. His family and his teachers shook their heads doubtfully; they considered him flighty, but he obstinately followed the path to which his unerring unconscious instinct had led him. "Nothing is so mighty in a poet, and influences his development so decisively, be it for good or for evil, as that which he does unconsciously," says Jean Paul.

For a time Wagner studied and composed all kinds of things in secret. His most interesting experiment was a pastoral play, for which he made "no poetical sketch, writing verses and music together, and so allowing the situations to grow of themselves out of the musical and poetical composition." But then he felt the necessity for more thorough study, and devoted himself thereto with great success until the *Cantor* of the *Thomasschule*, Weinlig, was able to dismiss him as a finished contrapuntist. He learned the technique of composition proper by experimenting with sonatas, symphonies, etc. He himself laid so little value upon these experiments that they are now quite forgotten, and many are lost; the only importance which they have for his artistic development lies in the proficiency which he gained in musical composition. Insignificant these first works of a youth of eighteen or nineteen certainly were not; besides the well-known sonata published by Breitkopf and Härtel as early as 1831, and a few other smaller pieces for the pianoforte, we learn that his orchestral compositions were nearly all performed, either in the theatre or in the *Gewandhaus;* for instance in 1830, the B♭ Overture "mit Paukenschlag"; in 1832 the D minor Concert Overture, and the C major Overture and fugue, the Overture to *König Enzio*, a symphony in C major, a *Scena* and *Aria*, etc.

In 1832, when Wagner was exactly nineteen years old, he wrote his first opera, *Die Hochzeit*. It was never finished; he burned it, because his sister Rosalie objected to the fiery sensuality of the poem. Yet it has a very great interest for us. A fragment of the opera was preserved in Würzburg, where it was discovered a few years ago by the well-known musical savant, Wilh. Tappert. It is rather an extensive fragment, and shows very clearly how Wagner, in his very first work for the stage, employed characteristic musical phrases in a symphonic way; even then, therefore, he was aiming at that unity of form which distinguishes his works from other "operas." The sharp musical definition of one of the specimens communicated by Tappert is also very striking

Wagner's first opera.



Each of the two parts of which the motive consists reminds us of the *Nibelungen*. *Die Hochzeit* is therefore not without importance as a document of Wagner's genuine and original individuality.[1] In the years which followed, when he was, as *Parsifal* says, "on the path of wandering and of suffering," this individuality appears in one way or another more blurred, and less recognizable; but it is peculiar to musical language that a single bar may contain an infinity of meaning. We do not know out of what important motive of the action of *Die Hochzeit* the musical motive just quoted has grown, but the figure rising so proudly and yet so tenderly in the bass, with the chords in the treble, reminding us of the *wehe! wehe!* of *Rheingold* are an unmistakable "Richard Wagner motive."

2. *Die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot*

These two works were written, one immediately after the other, at the commencement of the first years of his wanderings from one German provincial theatre to another. As I related in my first chapter, *die Feen* was never performed during the life of the composer; *das Liebesverbot* only once. As attempts to force an entry to the German stage they were unsuccessful; biographically their chief interest lies in the evidence which they afford of the astonishing elasticity of Wagner's mind. A greater contrast could scarcely be imagined than that between the romantic sentimentality of *die Feen*, and the somewhat broad comedy of *das Liebesverbot*. With all his iron inflexibility and obstinate persistence in the course which he has once recognized as the right

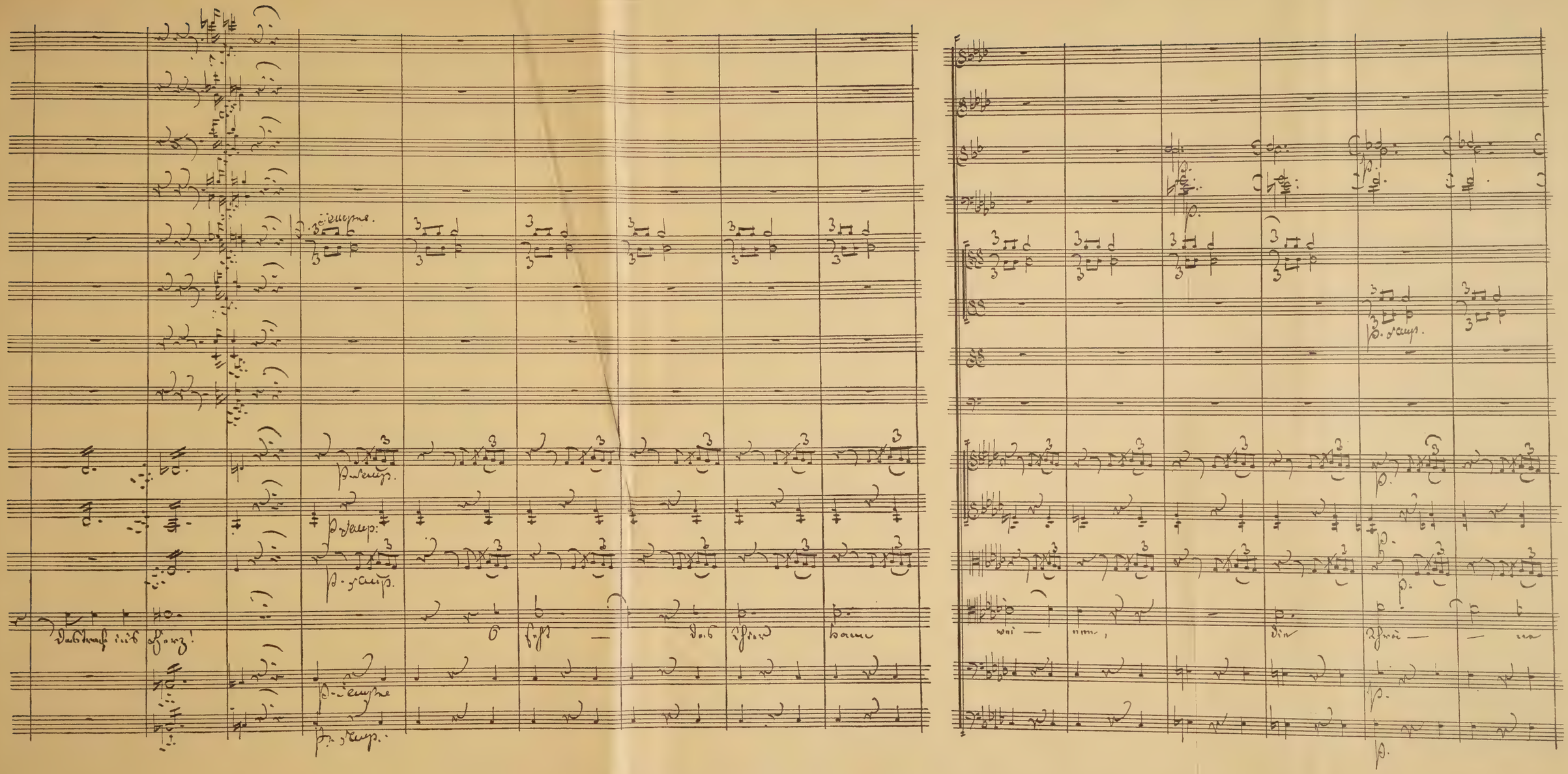
The poems and the music.

[1] *Cf. Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 1887, p. 337.

one, he possesses in a marked degree the gift of adapting himself to given circumstances and impressions. The very choice of the subject, and the mode of its treatment in the poem, make it at first difficult to believe that the two works can be by the same author, and written one immediately after the other. Yet the last touches were put to *die Feen* on January 1st, 1834, and the poem of *das Liebesverbot* was written in May of the same year. The musical treatment of the two works offers a contrast quite as striking as that of the poems. It is true that we only know a few fragments of the score of *das Liebesverbot*, the work itself not having yet been printed. The extract here given in piano arrangement will suffice to indicate the character of the music; it is taken from the most impressive scene in the work, that where the high-hearted Isabella intercedes for her brother's life, the chaste maiden for the sinning man. The *aria* is not devoid of expression; but in the whole of *die Feen* it would not be possible to find one instance of a similar treatment of the voice. We have too Wagner's own testimony: "Anyone who compared the composition of *das Liebesverbot* with that of *die Feen* would find it almost incomprehensible that so complete a change of style could take place in so short a time; the blending of the two into harmonious unity was the work of my further artistic development" (iv. 316).

If we regard these two poems a little more closely, and look through the gaudy operatic shell to the poetic kernel within, we shall soon become aware, not only that they were written by the same poet, but that they have many features in common with the works of his riper years.[1] The leading motive of both works is redemption by love; in both we also find the ideas of *sin* and *grace* as determining elements of the action. It is true that in *das Liebesverbot* (which is entitled a grand comic opera) these motives are rather indicated than fully developed; but however boisterous the comedy, the main interest in this youthful work lies in the deliverance of the sinner by the chaste maiden, his sister, in which it shows a kinship with *Rienzi* on the one hand, and on the other with the *Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser*. The earlier work however, *die Feen*, though disfigured as a whole by a great deal of operatic padding, exhibits these motives in all their deep, impressive poetic beauty. How tragic is the scene when Arindal curses the thing dearest to him in the world—his wife Ada! how impressive the one which forms the culminating point of the drama, the scene of

[1] An intimate acquaintance with Wagner's poems may be presumed in every educated person at the present day, but ignorance of these earlier works is excusable. *Das Liebesverbot* follows Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* very closely; the story of *die Feen* is told by Wagner as follows: "A fairy renounces her immortality for the sake of a man whom she loves. She can only become mortal by the observance of certain hard conditions on the part of her lover; should he fail, she will have to suffer a cruel fate. The ordeal is that he shall not lose faith in her or disown her, however wicked and cruel she may appear in the part she is forced to assume, and he succumbs to it; the fairy is changed to a stone and at last released by the wistful singing of her beloved, whom the fairy-king now receives, together with his bride, into the immortal joys of the fairy realm" (*Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde*, iv. 313).



Facsimile of a portion of the original score of *Die Feen.*

Arindal's madness, with its rich and varied scale of human emotions! how beautifully conceived is the disenchantment of the stone by the song of the lover! "Yes," cries Arindal, "I feel divine power within me! I know the might of song, the divine gift possessed by mortals!" He sings; his song breaks the stony spell, and his beloved wife sinks into his embrace. But nothing brings Wagner so entirely before us as the passage given here in facsimile. Arindal has shot a hind.

H. Hendrich. The Fairy.

"Ich zielte gut! Ha, ha! das traf ins Herz!
Oh seht! das Tier kann weinen!
Die Thräne glänzt in seinem Aug';
O! wie's gebrochen nach mir schaut!
Wie schön sie ist."[1]

Not only are we reminded of *Parsifal* by the stress laid on sympathy, *cf.* Act I.:

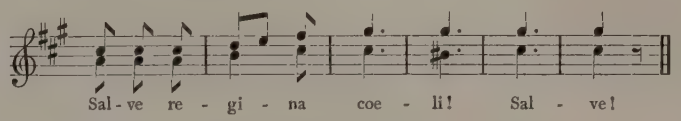
"Gebrochen das Aug', siehst du den Blick!"[2]

but the peculiar poetic character of the word-tone-poet is expressed very decidedly in these few lines. No mere word-poet could have dared to express a deep emotion like that contained in the line: "oh see, the beast can weep," so directly as this, or to join it immediately on to the preceding "ha, ha! it pierced his heart"; no mere musician could have contented himself with these four bars and the touchingly simple declamation. Here we may realize that the poet coming suddenly into being in this work of his twentieth year is destined to reveal a new art to the world.

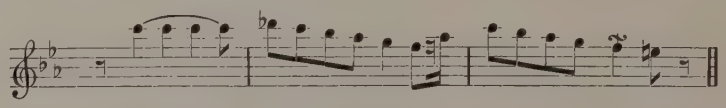
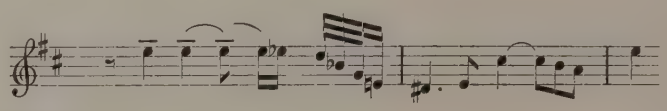
With regard to the music of these two works (I should mention that I have

[1] 'Twas fairly aim'd; ha ha! it pierced his heart!
Oh see! the beast can weep!
The tear-drop glistens in his eye,
His broken glance is turned to me!
How beautiful!

[2] Broken his glance—see'st thou his eye?

only been able to examine a few fragments of *das Liebesverbot*); taking each as a whole, the most characteristic thing about them seems to me a certain want of self-reliance, wherever the music is not either moving freely on its own wings, or else for the moment inspired by the poetry. When the former is the case the authentic Richard Wagner is plainly discernible. The church chorus of nuns for example in *das Liebesverbot* reminds one unmistakably of the "grace-melody" in *Tannhäuser*.[1]

The score of *die Feen* contains peculiarities of style which even point directly to *Parsifal;* for instance the passage in the first act:

"Dein Auge leuchtet mir nicht mehr!
Dein Busen, ach, erwärmt mich nicht!
Kein Kuss stillt meiner Lippen Durst!
Dein Arm umfängt mich nimmermehr!"

with the musical figure heard between each line alternately on violoncello, violin, and flute,

compare this with the figure employed in a very similar way in the second act of *Parsifal:*

where the words are:

"Ja! diese Stimme! so rief sie ihm;—
Und diesen Blick, deutlich erkemn' ich ihn,—etc."

But in *die Feen* the purely musical portions also deserve special attention; the overture is built up out of the most important motives of the drama and breathes the true spirit of Wagner; the stormy agitation and pregnant themes of the introduction to the second act bear the character of much later compositions, *e.g.*, the introduction to Act II. of *Walküre;* the song of victory with which the third act opens, though musically inferior to the others, displays in some degree the gorgeous colouring and exalted dignity which Wagner so often employed to express majesty, *e.g.*, in *Rienzi*, in *Tannhäuser* (the reception of the guests), in the *Huldigungsmarsch* for King Ludwig II., etc. It is impossible to deny,

[1] Act III.:

"Und Tausenden er Gnade gab, entsündigt
er Tausende sich froh erheben hiess."

DAS LIEBESVERBOT

oder:

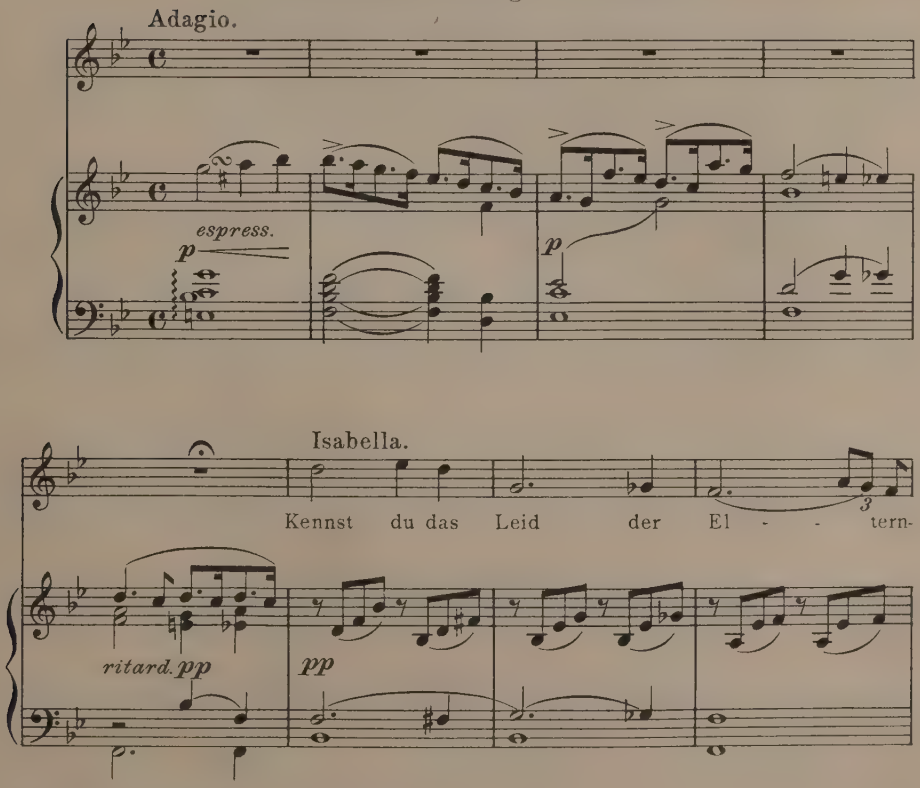
DIE NOVIZE VON PALERMO.

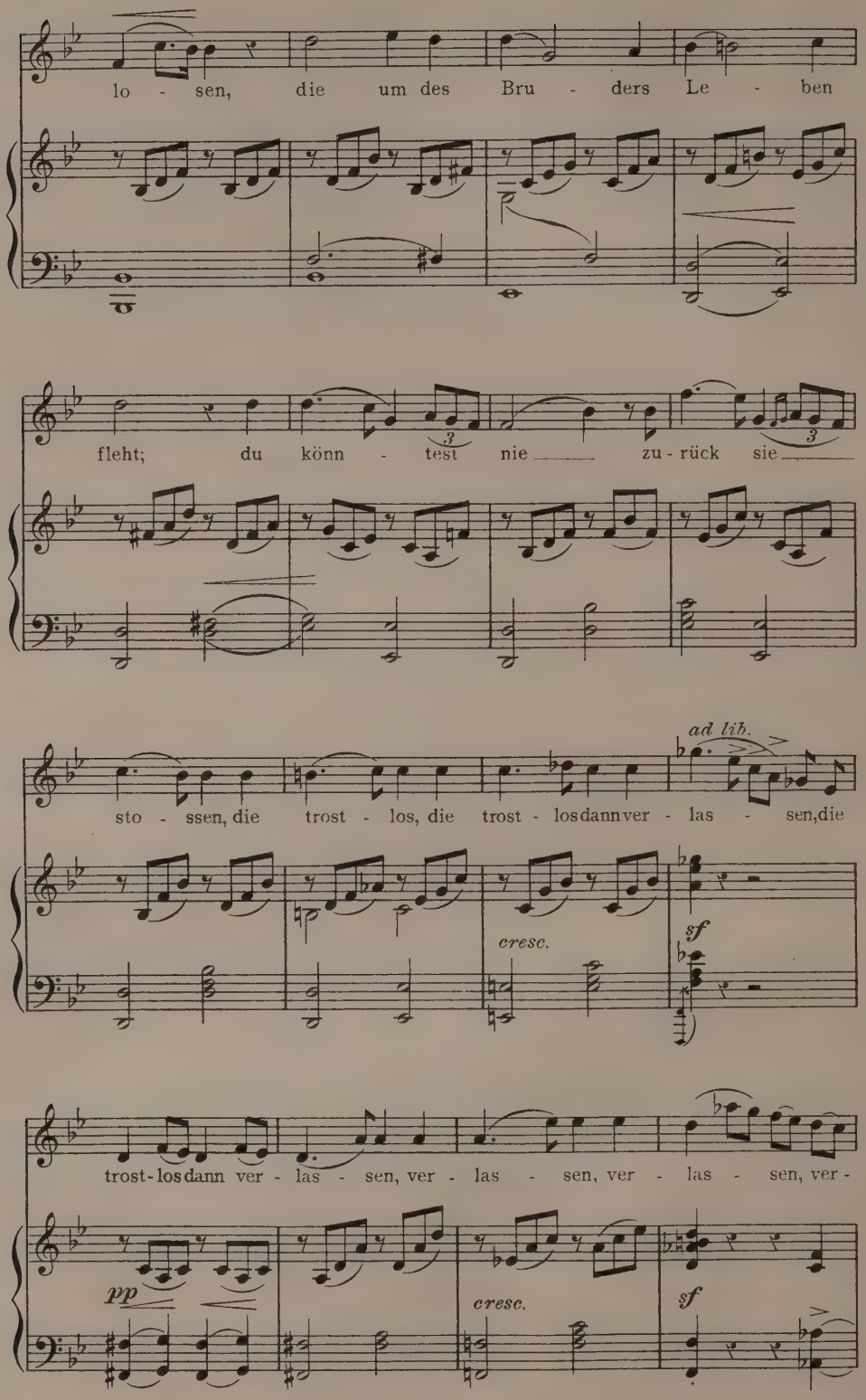
Grosse komische Oper in zwei Akten

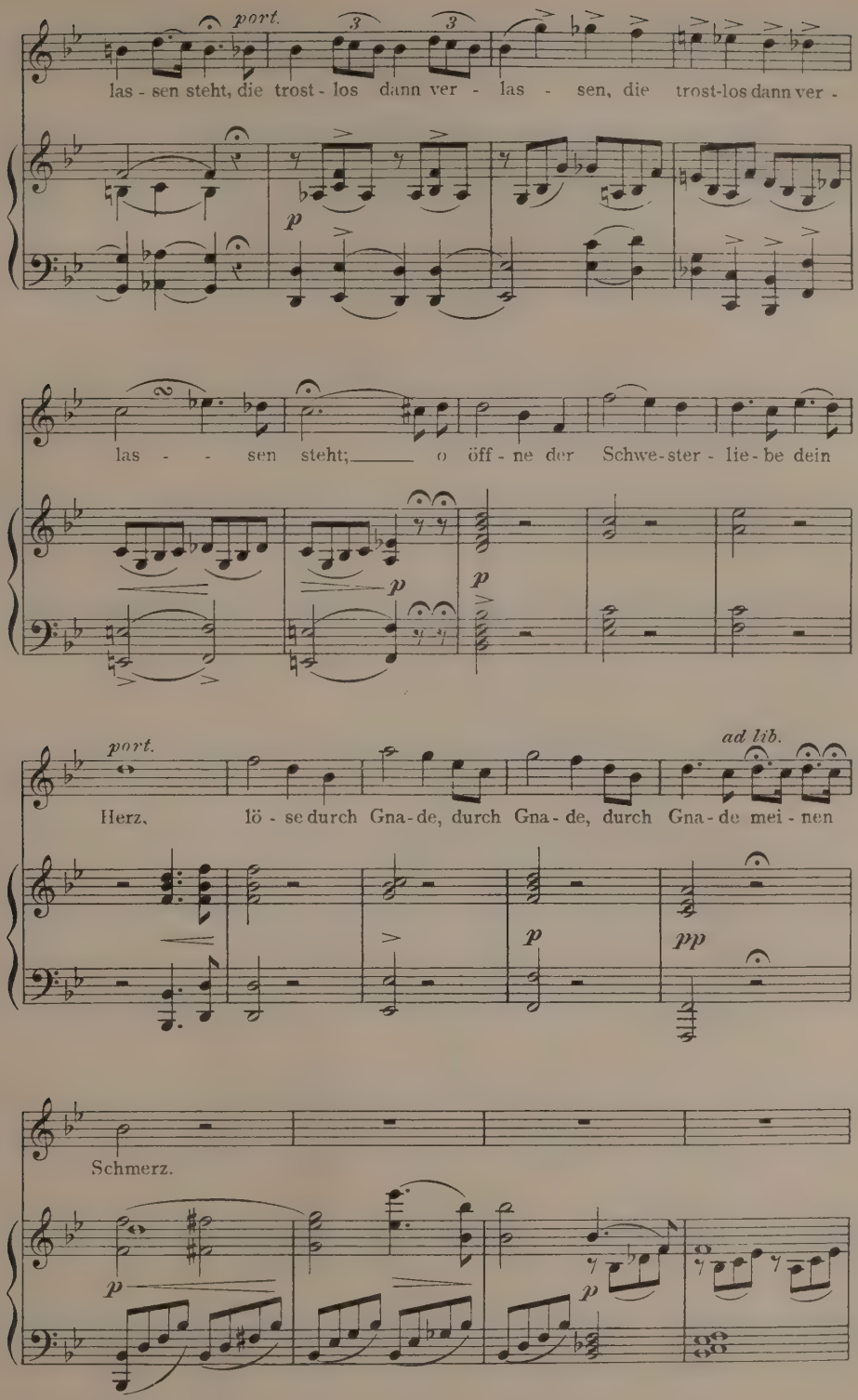
von

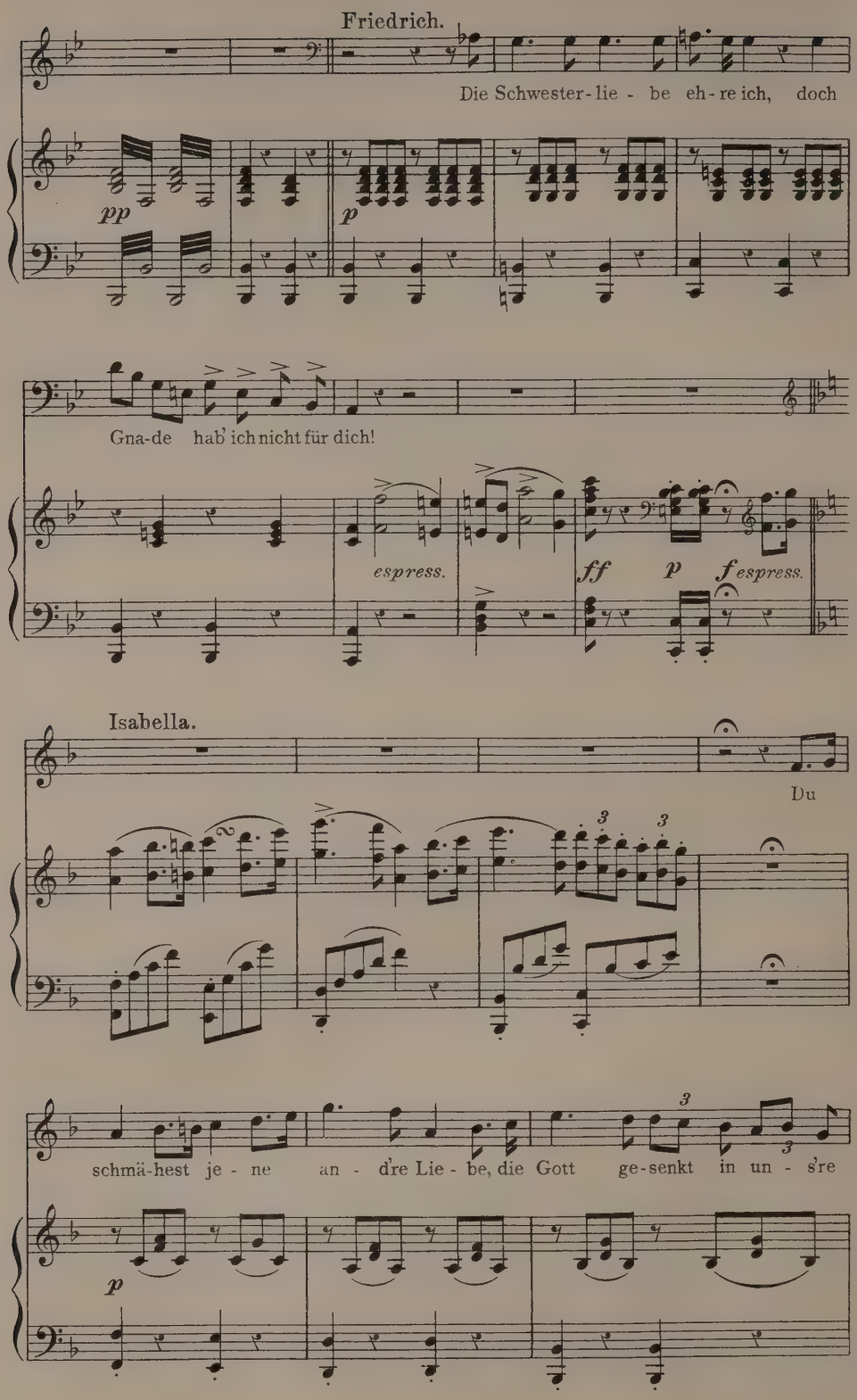
RICHARD WAGNER.

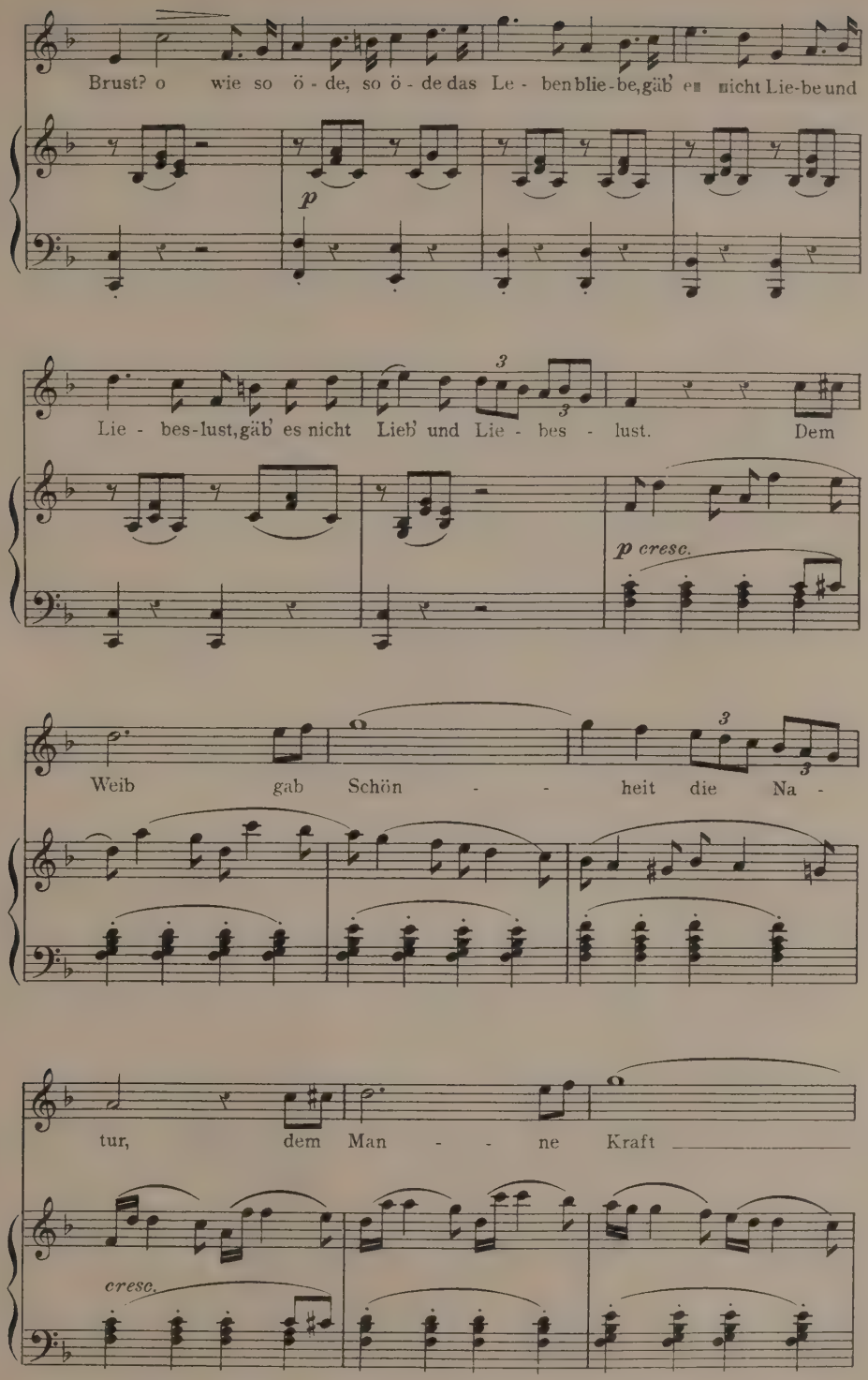
1. Akt: Finale; Gesang der Isabella.

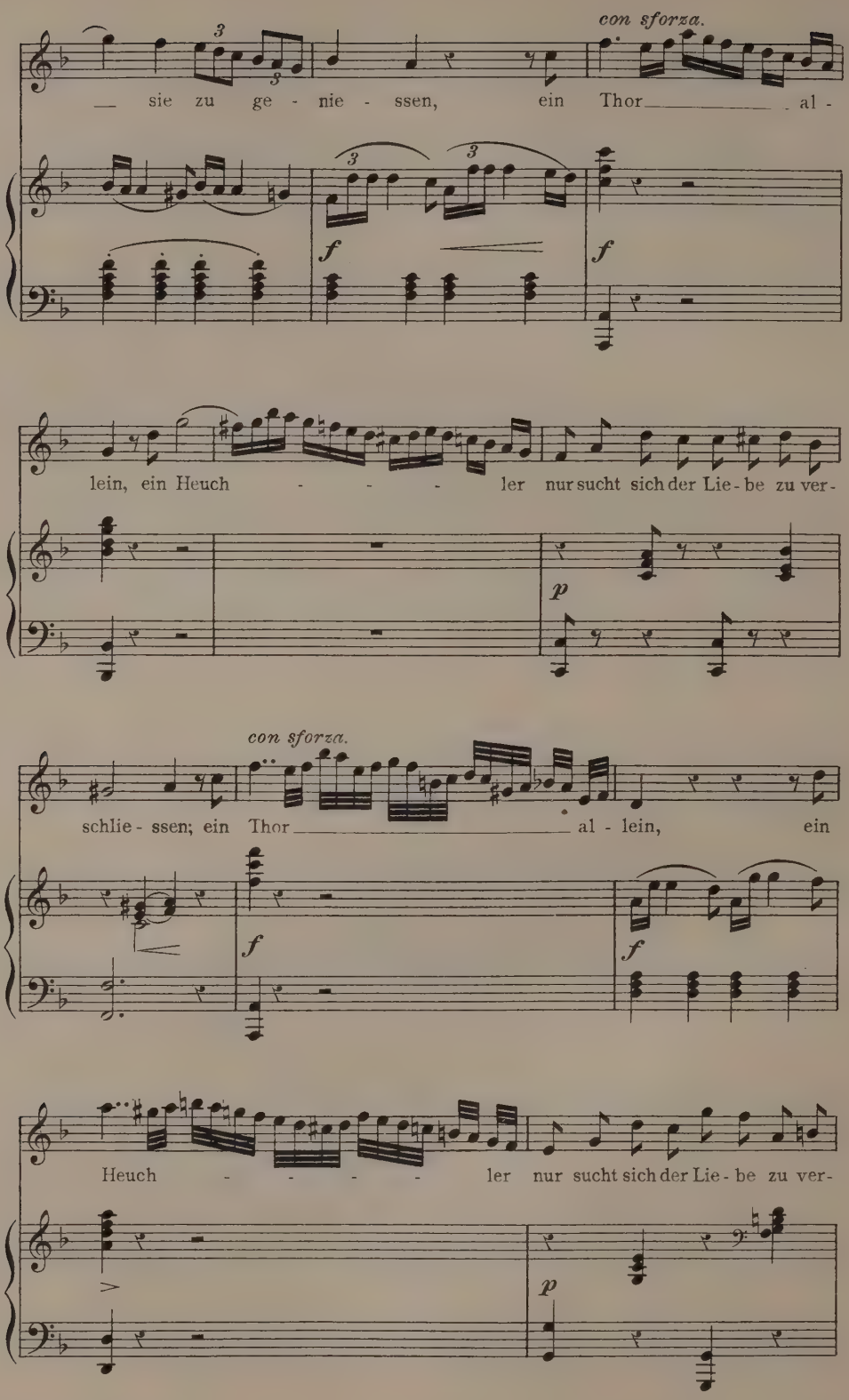


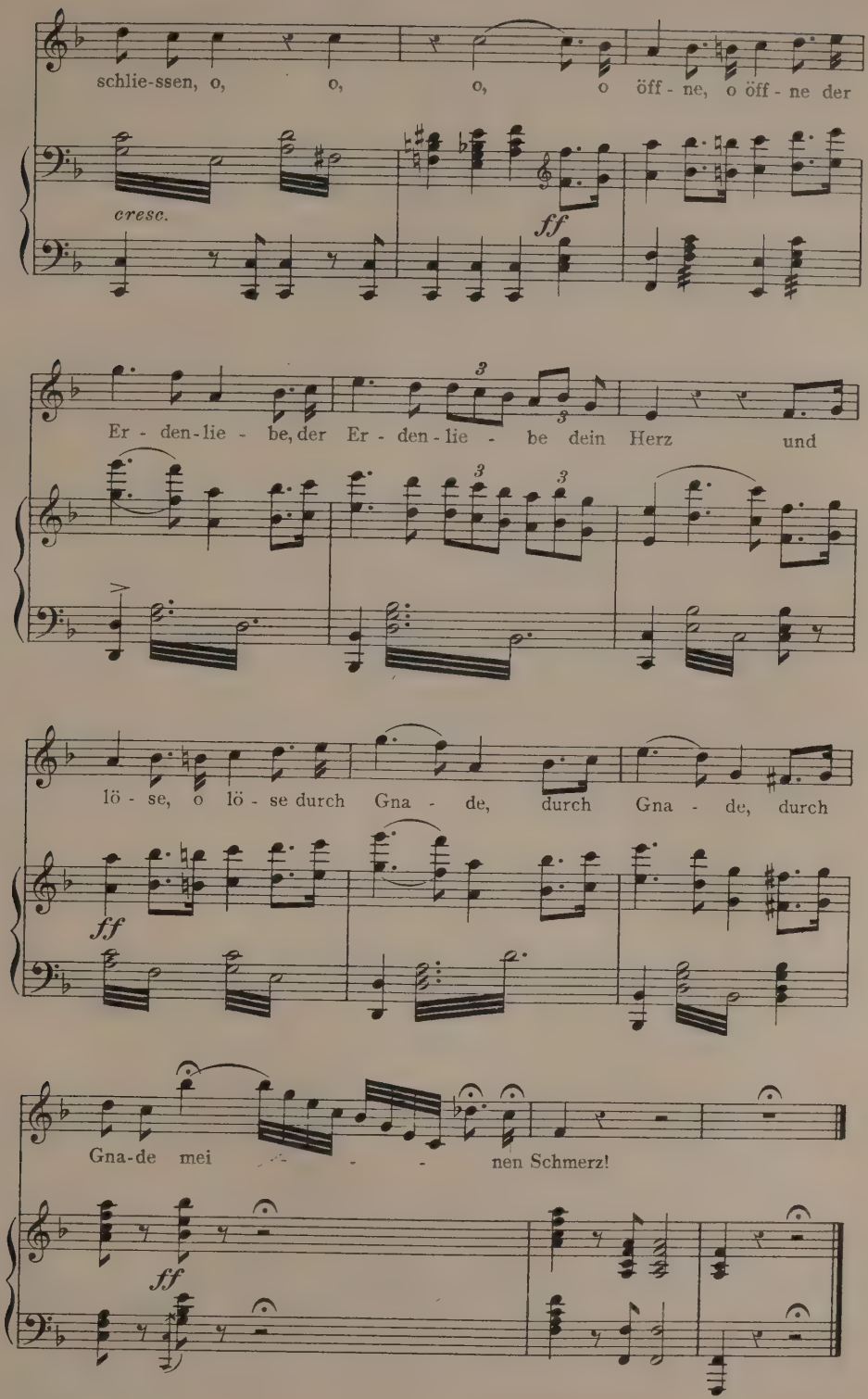

lo - sen, die um des Bru - ders Le - ben
fleht; du könn - test nie zu - rück sie
ad lib.
sto - ssen, die trost - los, die trost - losdann ver - las - sen, die
cresc.
sf
trost-losdann ver - las - sen, ver - las - sen, ver - las - sen, ver -
pp
cresc.
sf


port.
las - sen steht, die trost - los dann ver - las - sen, die trost-los dann ver -
las - - sen steht;_____ o öff - ne der Schwe-ster - lie-be dein
port.
ad lib.
Herz, lö - se durch Gna-de, durch Gna - de, durch Gna - de mei - nen
Schmerz.

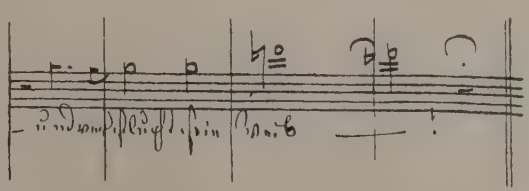

Friedrich.
Die Schwester-lie - be eh-re ich, doch
pp
p
Gna-de hab' ich nicht für dich!
espress.
ff
p
f espress.
Isabella.
Du
schmä-hest je - ne an - dre Lie - be, die Gott ge-senkt in un - s're
p


Brust? o wie so ö - de, so ö - de das Le - ben blie-be, gäb' es nicht Lie-be und
p
Lie - bes-lust, gäb' es nicht Lieb' und Lie - bes - lust. Dem
p cresc.
Weib gab Schön - - heit die Na -
tur, dem Man - - ne Kraft
cresc.


con sforza.
sie zu ge - nie - ssen, ein Thor al -
f
f
lein, ein Heuch ler nur sucht sich der Lie - be zu ver -
p
con sforza.
schlie - ssen; ein Thor al - lein, ein
f
f
Heuch ler nur sucht sich der Lie - be zu ver -
p

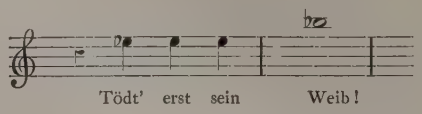

schlie-ssen, o, o, o, o öff - ne, o öff - ne der
cresc.
ff
Er - den-lie - be, der Er - den-lie - be dein Herz und
lö - se, o lö - se durch Gna - de, durch Gna - de, durch
ff
Gna-de mei - - - - nen Schmerz!
ff

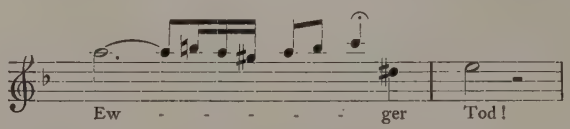
however, that his own individuality is often obscured and becomes unrecognizable by his imitations—perhaps half unconscious—of the styles of other masters who have impressed him. That in itself would not be very surprising; but it is interesting, and highly important for our knowledge of Wagner's artistic development, to note that, as a young composer, he did not confine himself to one model or one school, but knew and mastered everything that was good, and was able to turn the most various styles to account, according as they were required by the character of his poem. Wagner himself tells us that the music of *das Liebesverbot* was written under the influence of modern French composers (especially Auber), and of the Italians; of *die Feen*, written at almost exactly the same time, he says: "I set the libretto to music in accordance with the impressions which I had received from Beethoven, Weber, and Marschner." On the other hand, an essay written in the same year (1834) shows how willingly he often resigned himself to the guidance of Mozart; he says: "We have strayed further and further from the path by which Mozart saved dramatic music." Gluck too he studied closely, and he was willing to be instructed by the masters of the old French school, whom he valued so highly—Cherubini, Méhul, and Spontini; from all this we learn how wide and comprehensive was the musical and dramatic training of the great composer.[1] How far these influences are visible in *das Liebesverbot* is difficult to say, as only a few fragments are known. In *die Feen* competent musicians seem to be unanimous in declaring the influence of Weber to be predominant. I will not venture to contradict them, but many passages seem to me rather to point to Beethoven; the close of the scene of Arindal's madness, for instance, is surely more inspired by Beethoven's *Malinconia* than by any composition of Weber. Specially important is his adherence to Beethoven in the declamation, particularly when some deep poetic meaning has to be declaimed. Compare for instance this passage:



[1] Friedrich Pecht, who knew Wagner at the end of the thirties, writes: "His knowledge of the entire musical literature of every epoch was almost inconceivable for such a young man. He was just as familiar with the earlier Italians, Palestrina, Pergolese, etc., as with the older Germans. It was from him that I first gained an idea of Sebastian Bach; Gluck was, even then, his constant study;—Haydn's Nature-painting; Mozart's genius, and the unhappy effects of his position in Salzburg and in Vienna; the special characteristics of the French composers, Lully, Boieldieu, Auber; the simple, popular charm of his beloved Weber; the figure of Beethoven towering far above them all; Mendelssohn's elegant drawing-room music, every one of these he described to us with such animation and vigour, singing many of the tunes, that they still remain in my memory exactly as he represented them" (*Allg. Zeitung*, March 22nd, 1883).

(written in the soprano clef, the first note *e*, the second *b*) with Leonora's:

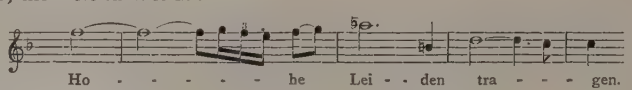


Passages like the following fine one at the words, "Was, o was ist die Unsterblichkeit? Ein grenzenloser, ew'ger Tod!" also remind one of Beethoven.[1]

One thing at least becomes evident when we study Wagner's two first works for the stage, namely, that if musical (*i.e.* operatic) considerations were decisive for the choice and execution of the libretto, they proved a two-edged sword. The bonds imposed upon the poetic invention had the effect of hampering the music. For Wagner is and always remains a *poet*. In *die Feen*, wherever the poem contains great situations, and expresses them in suitable words, the music at once gains in importance; whenever it sinks to an operatic libretto, the music becomes poor. What Wagner once wrote about song-composition is equally true of himself: "It is the best evidence of a healthy attitude of the musician to the poet when his tone-composition becomes musical exactly in the degree in which he has been inspired by some weighty matter in the poem."[2]

Word-poet and Tone-poet.

In my treatise *Le drame Wagnérien* I laid particular stress on the fact that the works of the first half of Wagner's life always appeared in pairs, and it is certainly a very remarkable one. Here we see *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot* written one immediately after the other; after a pause of several years we have two more works, presenting the same strong contrast, namely *Rienzi* and *der Fliegende Holländer*, and so entirely simultaneous are they as regards the composition that it can only be regarded as a pure chance that *Rienzi* was finished before *der Fliegende Holländer*. The same is true of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin;* in the mind of the composer they were conceived together, and the musical and dramatic execution of one work followed as closely upon that of the other as Wagner's numerous official duties permitted. In the treatise just mentioned, where I was dealing, not with Wagner's life, but with the new form of the drama which he had created, the word-tone-drama, I explained this remarkable, and at first rather perplexing circumstance, by supposing it to be the result of a conflict between the poet and the musician, or to speak more correctly, between

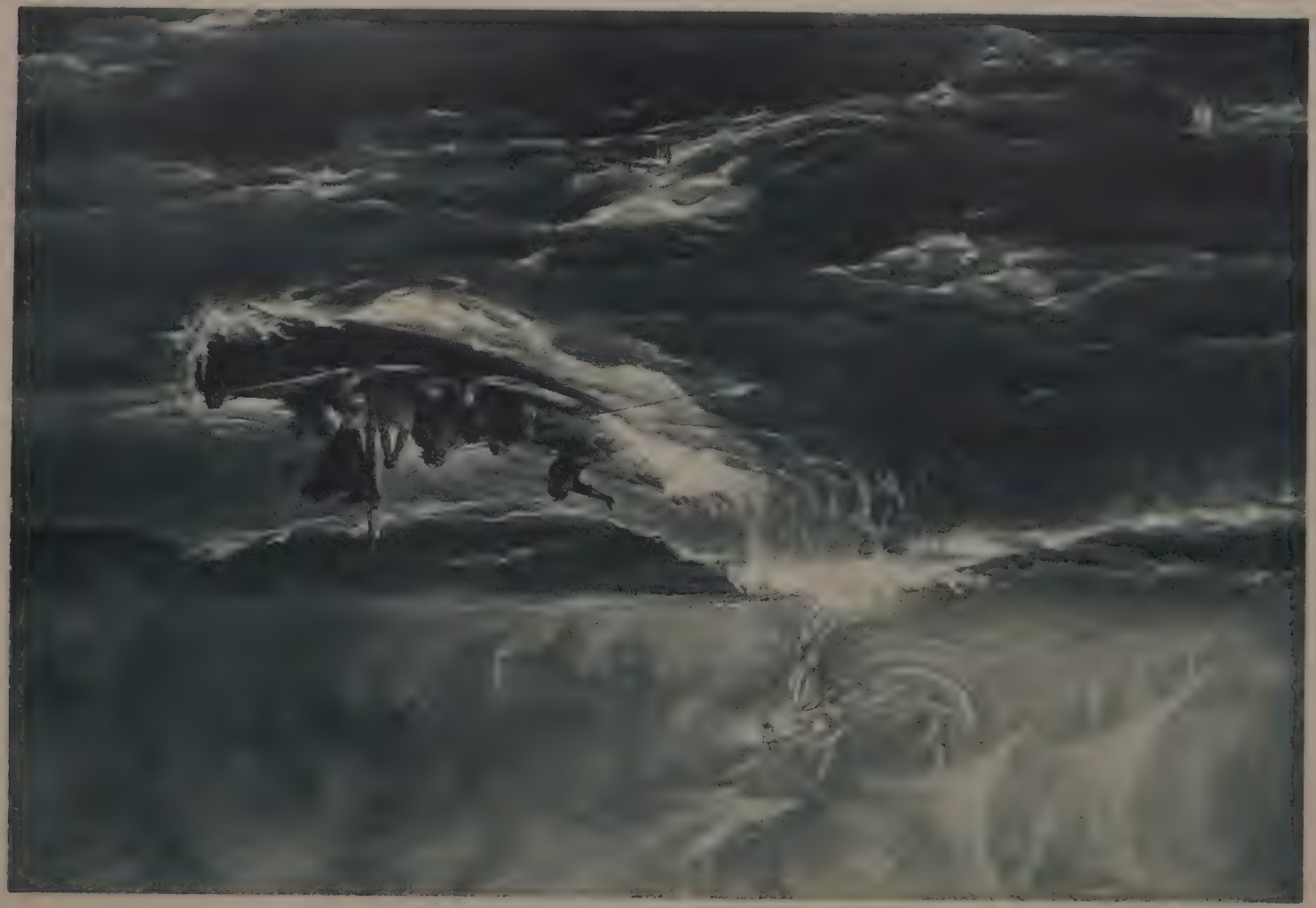
[1] *Cf. Fidelio*, the Trio in Act I.:



[2] "On Wilhelm Baumgartner's Songs," printed in the letters to Uhlig.

the word-poet and the tone-poet, in the breast of the *Meister*. I pointed out that *die Feen*, *Rienzi* and *Lohengrin* possessed one characteristic in common, namely the relative predominance of the musical expression, whilst such works as *das Liebesverbot* and *der Fliegende Holländer*, however much they differed in respect of style, might all be regarded as a reaction against this tendency. If we consider merely the dramatic form, and follow it backwards from its last conscious development to its first beginnings, this view is not only justifiable, but inevitable. But every interpretation of this kind is to some extent artificial; one is reminded of the reproductions of natural phenomena in the physical laboratory, where, by the elimination of all adventitious circumstances, any one constituent or single fact can be brought prominently forward, although the reality, with its complex and varied forms, may be very much distorted by the process. Here, in this book, we are dealing with Wagner's life, and have only to consider the man; his works come under our notice, less for their own sake than as aids to a more exact knowledge of the course of his artistic life, and it would be wrong to draw arbitrary distinctions, however carefully guarded and explained, between Wagner the poet and Wagner the musician. The youthful author of *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot* is the same person as the boy who wrote tragedies and pastoral plays; in these last we regarded the desire for poetic imitation as less individually characteristic than the effort for expression appearing in the boy-poet's zealous endeavours to acquire mastery, first over the language of words, then over that of music. And as a man he felt that for the complete realization of his poetic intent he must make use of every means of expression, that he could no more do without "the indispensable foundation" of language than without the "realizing aid" of music. When we are dealing with the creative soul the distinction between poet and musician is purely artificial; the musician is "the poet revealing his purpose in its deepest meaning"; the poet can only grasp this purpose (that of directly representing so deeply emotional a subject-matter) in so far as and because he is in the depth of his heart a musician. And the more he attains perfection in his art, the more impossible it becomes to draw a line and to say, here ends the work of the poet, here begins that of the musician. In conception, in the main lines of the dramatic execution, as well as in the smallest detail of versification and choice of words, a poem like that of *Tristan* has sprung as truly from music as Aphrodite, the goddess of perfect beauty, has sprung from the waves of the sea. Whether therefore we consider the pastoral play of his boyhood, or the master-works of his mature age, we shall always find word-poet and tone-poet to be one and the same person in Wagner. But to understand such early works as *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot*—that is to bring them into intelligible connection with the course of his mental development—it is necessary that we should follow a very simple process of thought to which I will now proceed. The language of words is learned without any effort of our own; it is practised from the first dawn of consciousness, and the principal object of our school education is to attain skill

in the use of this instrument of expressing our thoughts; the technique of music on the other hand is excessively complicated, and lies just as far away from the ordinary concerns of human life as does higher mathematics. There have been great poets who possessed a very slender education, but there never was a composer who was not obliged to acquire the technique of music by long and laborious study. Music, in other words, is an *art*. The most undoubted musical geniuses, such as Mozart and Beethoven, required years before they became masters in the use of the purely technical apparatus—for I am not speaking here of poetic inspiration. And so too we find Wagner, directly he has resolved to make music the serious study of his life, occupying himself for some time with the composition of purely musical works, overtures, sonatas, and symphonies. But even now, with *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot*, where he returns to his own proper ground, that of the stage, the musician continues to predominate,—or, to put it more correctly, the word-tone-poet, Richard Wagner, is most concerned about the *musical* expression, and it is this which determines him, both in the choice of the subject and in its execution. But to say, as is generally done, that Wagner was at that time a musician, *i.e.* an operatic composer, and that he gradually became a poet, is obviously to turn the matter upside down. The reason why music predominates in these early works is not that he was himself a musician rather than a poet, but quite the contrary; it was because he was not yet the master-musician that he became afterwards. It will scarcely be seriously asserted that *die Feen* contains more music than *Tristan* or *Parsifal*. In these early works the musician is not yet fledged, the future master has not yet acquired command of the musical expression, he cannot yet trust himself to move in music as in his own proper element. It is true that he can solve the most difficult problems of counterpoint with ease; the *Cantor* of the *Thomasschule* had already certified to his ability in this respect; his skill in polyphonic writing is admirable; his knowledge of the human voice and of orchestral colouring remarkable; what he lacks is absolute trust in the poetic omnipotence of music. Music does not here determine the poem out of itself and its own fulness, as in *Tristan;* it is *anxiety* for the music which determines, and often hinders the poet. Wagner's whole intellectual development, from this time onwards, may be described as the progressive growth of the musician within him. And if we wish to determine the position which *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot* occupy in his intellectual development, we may say, not that Wagner was at that time solely musician, but rather that the predominant part which music plays in these dramatic attempts stamps them as purely musical works—operas—simply because the word-tone-poet is not yet fully master of the musical expression, that is, not in the way in which he requires it for his purposes; it is the want of self-reliance still clinging to the music which makes it here the predominant element.



3. *Rienzi* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*

Historical dates.

The idea of choosing the Roman tribune as the hero of an opera seems to be traceable back to the time immediately after the completion of *das Liebesverbot*. The direct incentive, however, came from Bulwer Lytton's well-known novel, which Wagner read in the summer of 1837. In January 1838 the first detailed sketch of *Rienzi* was composed, and the poem written in the summer of the same year. Notwithstanding the interruption of his journey to Paris in the summer of 1839, and the many worries which followed thereon, the score was ready in November 1840. In the spring of 1838, that is when he was just about to commence the poem of *Rienzi*, another figure, that of the flying Dutchman, arose vividly before his mind; it originated in a story which he had read casually, and he says of this first impression: "I was stimulated by the subject, which impressed itself indelibly upon my mind." For a time, however, the figure of the Dutchman was obscured by that of *Rienzi*. In the summer of 1839 he travelled in a small sailing vessel from Pillau to London, encountering some very heavy weather on his journey; the ship was obliged to anchor off the coast of Norway, "and now," he says, "the flying Dutchman again came back to me; it gained psychic intensity from my own situation, form and colour from the storms, the waves, the working of the ship, and the rocky northern coast" (iv. 321). Arrived in Paris, Wagner sent in the sketch of *der Fliegende Holländer* to the Grand Opéra; this was before he had finished *Rienzi;* the sketch was purchased from him, and the composition of the poetry and the music entrusted to others! In May 1841, soon after the completion of *Rienzi*, Wagner then wrote his own libretto, and the sketch of the entire composition was completed in seven weeks—only a few months therefore after the completion of *Rienzi*. I have already related in my first chapter how both works were performed for the first time within a few weeks of each other in the winter of 1842-43 in Dresden. It was their great success on this occasion which led to Wagner's appointment as *Hofkapellmeister* in the Saxon capital.

The quibble.

In itself it would be no difficult task to follow, step by step, the artistic development of the word-tone-poet, beginning with the pastoral play, with its words and music written together, and ending with the *Ring* and with *Tristan*, were not our minds obscured by ready-made concepts, which are like coloured spectacles before our intellectual vision, showing everything in one colour, whereby the more delicate but often essential details are hidden altogether. In the present case the intelligence is clouded by the concept: *opera*. Wagner says: "the most annoying worries which I have ever had to endure in the course of my life, the most distressing tortures and degrading humiliations, have all arisen out of a single misunderstanding, namely that owing to the external circumstances of my life I have had to appear in the æsthetic and social order of the world only as a composer and conductor of operas. This

strange quibble has been the source of endless confusion in my relations to the world and to the demands which it made upon me" (viii. 238). At the present day the full, free understanding of Wagner's poetic capacity, and of the essential nature of his works, is still prevented by this same quibble. The very fact that he is always reckoned among the class of executive professional musicians is misleading; for he was only active as *Kapellmeister* for about twelve years, that is for about one-sixth of his whole life, and not a quarter of his public life. Wagner did not grow up in musical circles; his professional studies as a musician were carried on under private instruction, whilst he was a student of philosophy at the university, and he never once set foot into a musical school of any kind; all the rest he did for himself by his indefatigable study of scores, especially those of Beethoven (at twenty he knew the ninth symphony by heart!), and by diligent practice in composition. Then he turned to the stage. The entire course of his education shows a man for whom music is not an end in itself, but a means of expression. It must be remembered too that Wagner's musical technique was, if I may so express it, purely intellectual; he never spent a single hour on mechanical technique, that is on learning to play on any instrument. His unrivalled performances as a conductor were not due to his possessing any extraordinary technical skill, but rather to the living intuition whereby a great poet always finds the right expression of the poetic substance in an important work, coupled, it is true, with a sovereign command over the technical construction. But Wagner was really out of place as a *Kapellmeister;* it was necessity that drove him to accept the post for a time; his *poetical* feats of conducting were not of a kind which could be repeated evening after evening. And again, Wagner was a dramatist;

16te Vorstellung im ersten Abonnement.

Königlich Sächsisches Hoftheater.

Donnerstag, den 20. October 1842.

Zum ersten Male:

Rienzi,

der Letzte der Tribunen.

Große tragische Oper in 5 Aufzügen von Richard Wagner.

Personen:

Cola Rienzi, päpstlicher Notar. — — — Herr Tichatscheck.
Irene, seine Schwester. — — — Dem. Wüst.
Steffano Colonna, Haupt der Familie Colonna. — Herr Dettmer.
Adriano, sein Sohn. — — — Mad. Schröder-Devrient.
Paolo Orsini, Haupt der Familie Orsini. — Herr Wächter.
Raimondo, Abgesandter des Papstes in Avignon. — Herr Bestri.
Baroncelli, römische Bürger. — — Herr Reinhold.
Cecco del Vecchio, römische Bürger. — — Herr Risse.
Ein Friedensbote. — — — — Dem. Thiele.

Gesandte der lombardischen Städte, Neapels, Baierns, Böhmens ꝛc. Römische Nobili, Bürger und Bürgerinnen Rom's, Friedensboten. Barmherzige Brüder. Römische Trabanten. Rom um die Mitte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts.

Die im zweiten Akt vorkommenden Solotänze werden ausgeführt von den Damen: Pecci-Ambrogio, Benoni und den Herren Ambrogio und Ballettmeister Lepitre.

Der Text der Gesänge ist an der Casse für 3 Neugroschen zu haben.

Einlaß-Preise:

Ein Billet in die Logen des ersten Ranges und das Amphitheater . .	1 Thlr.	10 Ngr.
" " " Fremdenlogen des zweiten Ranges Nr. 1. 14. und 29.	1 "	10 "
" " " übrigen Logen des zweiten Ranges	— "	25 "
" " " Sperr-Sitze der Mittel- u. Seiten-Gallerie des dritten Ranges	— "	15 "
" " " Mittel- und Seiten-Logen des dritten Ranges	— "	12½ "
" " " Sperr-Sitze der Gallerie des vierten Ranges	— "	10 "
" " " Mittel-Gallerie des vierten Ranges	— "	8 "
" " " Seiten-Gallerie-Logen daselbst	— "	6 "
" " " Sperr-Sitze im Cercle.	— "	25 "
" " " Parterre-Logen	— "	25 "
" " das Parterre	— "	15 "

Die Billets sind nur am Tage der Vorstellung gültig, und zurückgebrachte Billets werden nur bis Mittag 12 Uhr an demselben Tage angenommen.

Der Verkauf der Billets gegen sofortige baare Bezahlung findet in der, in dem untern Theile des Rundbaues befindlichen Expedition, auf der rechten Seite, nach der Elbe zu, früh von 9 bis Mittags 12 Uhr und Nachmittags von 3 bis 4 Uhr statt.

Alle zur heutigen Vorstellung bestellte und zugesagte Billets sind Vormittags von 9 Uhr bis längstens 11 Uhr abzuholen, außerdem darüber anders verfügt wird.

Der freie Einlaß beschränkt sich bei der heutigen Vorstellung blos auf die zum Hofstaate gehörigen Personen und die Mitglieder des Königl. Hoftheaters.

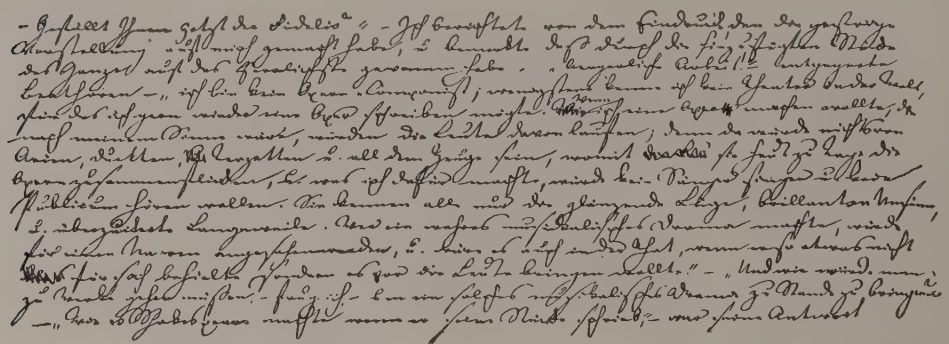
Einlaß um 5 Uhr. Anfang um 6 Uhr.
Ende um 10 Uhr.

FACSIMILE (THEATER PROGRAMME OF THE FIRST *RIENZI* PERFORMANCE).

his place was *on the stage*, as manager of the whole dramatic representation, including the music; this was his post at Munich and at Bayreuth. Wagner, regarded as an operatic conductor in our sense of the word, will appear in quite a wrong aspect. To call Molière an actor is to say something perfectly true and characteristic of his genius; but to place Wagner in the category of professional musicians is to commit the logical blunder of confounding a subordinate concept with a primary one. It is like placing Schiller amongst the historians, and treating his poetic accomplishments as secondary. A misunderstanding with respect to Wagner as an *operatic conductor* ought at the present day to be impossible. Somewhat more difficult it is to arrive at a clear understanding about his capacity as *operatic composer*. The works of his first epoch are entitled operas by Wagner himself; *Die Feen* and *Lohengrin* for instance are called *Romantic Operas; das Liebesverbot* is a *Grand Comic opera; Rienzi* a *Grand Tragic opera;* even *Siegfried's Tod*, his first attempt to dramatize the Nibelungen myth, is called in the original manuscript of 1848, *A grand heroic opera in three acts*. Of *Rienzi* in particular Wagner says: "I saw my subject merely by the light of the opera," and he uses similar expressions about other works of this epoch. And yet he complains bitterly of the prevalent habit of representing him before the world as an operatic composer! Be it well observed however that in the sentence quoted above Wagner uses the word *only;* the misunderstanding lies in his being regarded *only* as a composer of operas. He does not deny that at one period of his life he was a composer of operas; on the contrary, he often dwells upon it, and calls the opera the spectacles through which he saw his subjects. But at no time was he *only* a composer of operas; he was in the first instance a poet; and the naïve astonishment which people express at a composer "writing his own libretti" would be more logical if not less naïve if they spoke rather of *the poet writing his own music*. The poems even of *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot* are very respectable performances, that is to say in their conception and in the manner in which the author has adapted the material from Gozzi and Shakespeare, and worked it into new artistic form, although in the single details he was less successful, owing to his being hampered by the disturbing influence of the opera. This shows the poetic strength that he possessed. The manner in which he has transformed Gozzi's *Donna serpente* into a story of redemption by love is most remarkable; it is not the fairy alone who is disenchanted; her faithful lover is also transported from earthly misery to the joys of heaven; the extraordinary depth of his poetic view is evidenced by the fact of his having quite unconsciously restored the ancient Indian legend to its original form.[1] Even *das Liebesverbot*, though conceived in a lighter vein, acquires a deep interest by his having departed from Shakespeare in the figures of the Lord Deputy and Isabella, to gain room for the musical characterization; Wagner, with the new means of expression at his disposal, is able to lay bare the very inmost recesses

[1] *Cf.* Rigveda, x. 95, and Satapatha Brâhmaṇa, xi. 5, 1.

of their souls; Shakespeare leaves us to guess them. In adhering, therefore, strictly to Wagner's own words, and insisting upon the fact that neither the full artistic worth of these early works, nor their importance for his own intellectual development, can be rightly estimated as long as they are regarded *only* as operas, I am certainly not guilty of cavilling about a word. I am asserting a fact, which it requires some critical acumen fully to perceive; it is that along with the operatic librettist and composer, both of whom are sorely cramped by the arbitrary domination of the opera, we may trace the hand of a creative poet, and one who is worthy of careful attention. This poet is the seer of whom I spoke, when discussing Wagner's art-doctrines;[1] the artist appears later, by degrees, as mastership is attained over the technical means; for here we have to deal with new matter, which the mind must first compel into its service, but the



Facsimile from the Original MS. of *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven*, 1840.[2]

seer is there from the beginning, his power is born with him, and it would seem to me that our critical faculties will be more profitably employed in endeavouring, with Wagner's aid, to discover the poet striving for expression in his operas, than in pointing out defects which every person of moderate ability can find for himself.

Rienzi. Especially is this true of *Rienzi*, and perhaps not one of his works is even now so little understood, or rather so *wrongly* understood, as *Rienzi*. Added to

[1] See Chap. ii. sect. 3.

[2] "Do you now like *Fidelio*"? I told him the impression which yesterday's performance had made upon me, and remarked that the work had gained immensely by the additional numbers which he had composed for it. "Vexatious work!" Beethoven answered. "I am no operatic composer; at least I know of no theatre in the world for which I should like to write another opera! Were I to write an opera after my own mind, the people would all run away, for it would contain neither arias, nor duets, nor terzetti, nor any of the other things with which operas are patched together now-a-days; and as for the things which I should write in their place, no singer would sing them and no public would listen to them. The public knows nothing but splendid lies, brilliant nonsense, or sugared dulness. Anyone who wrote a real musical drama would be taken for a fool, and he would be one indeed for bringing it out into the world and not keeping it to himself." "And how should one go to work," I asked, "to write a musical drama of that kind?" "In the way that Shakespeare did when he wrote his pieces," he replied.

this, the practice of making cuts has been carried to such an extent in every theatre in Germany that the work is now, as regards both its logical development and its catastrophe, absolutely unintelligible, and there remains a mere show-piece after the manner of Scribe-Meyerbeer, which Wagner has so aptly described as "effect without a cause." *Rienzi* is indeed universally regarded as an "opera in the style of Meyerbeer," or even as belonging to "Meyerbeer's school." With regard to this I have only one observation to make. When Wagner wrote the words of *Rienzi* and composed the music of the first two acts—by which all the rest was determined—he only knew *Robert le Diable; Les Huguenots* was first produced in Paris in 1836; in the years immediately following Wagner was in Königsberg and Riga, and it was some time before the new work reached those places. To suggest that *Rienzi* was influenced by *Robert le Diable* would be to make too great a demand upon our imagination.[1] There could be no doubt in anyone's mind as to the category to which *Rienzi* really belongs, were it not that the great masterpieces of the real French school, the true "opéra héröique," have entirely disappeared from our stages. Fortunately we know from Wagner's own reminiscences exactly how the case stood. The conception of *Rienzi* was inspired by a performance which he had witnessed of *Fernando Cortez*, under Spontini's own direction; and of the music he writes: "The music of *Rienzi*, whenever it was not directly determined by the subject-matter, followed the melismata of the Italian and French schools, which had struck me especially in the operas of Spontini." This decidés the matter. Elsewhere Wagner writes, with his usual directness and sincerity: "In writing the words of *Rienzi* I had no other object in my mind than to produce an effective operatic libretto; the grand opera was before my eyes, with all its glories, scenic and musical, and the rich, passionate, massive effects of its music." It seems to me however to make a great difference whether the "musical glories" and "rich passionate effects" which a young composer imitates are those of Meyerbeer or those of Spontini. Considering *Rienzi* as a mere opera, we may say that it is the last work of the Franco-Italian grand heroic school, and the intrinsic importance of its composer stamps it as the greatest, though not indeed the most mature of that school.

But *Rienzi* is not *only* an opera. Let any one who wishes to convince himself that this is so read the poem which Wagner has included in the first volume of his collected writings, and then go through the pianoforte score from beginning to end, so as to gain an idea of the composition as a whole.[2] *Rienzi* is in reality a powerful dramatic work, a true tragedy; Wagner was right in describing it as "a grand tragic opera." I maintain that in delineation of character *Rienzi* is scarcely surpassed by any one of his works. Especially the

[1] *Rienzi* is often said to have been "influenced" by Meyerbeer's *Prophète*, which was produced in 1849, two years after the completion of *Lohengrin!* It is however highly probable that the entire conception of *Le Prophète* was influenced by *Rienzi*.

[2] Only in Karlsruhe, and latterly in Berlin and Munich, are the performances of *Rienzi* sufficiently complete to admit of a knowledge of Wagner's drama being gathered from them.

hero, Rienzi himself, will bear comparison with any later creation. Fully to realize the creative vigour possessed by this young man of twenty-five, one should read Bulwer Lytton's novel and compare *his* hero with Wagner's! Equally astonishing is the way in which Wagner has grasped the superabundant wealth of material in its entirety, and condensed it to a simple, easily intelligible action.[1] That is the work of a really great poet. Scribe and Meyerbeer aim exclusively at theatrical effects and striking situations, but here there is not a single action which does not contribute to emphasize the character of the hero. "The German builds from within," says Wagner; and the German wishes in the drama above all things to recognize the inner hidden soul; hence it is that his artistic genius never rested until it had laid bare the innermost heart of its dramatic characters in the word-tone-drama. But the inward soul is a much simpler thing than the outer body; a thousand incidental circumstances here fall away; all conventionality and fashion, everything which possesses mere local and historical interest, is altogether unmeaning. This is why Wagner's figures, with all their warmth and passion, yet have something in them of the nature of types, or symbols, such as have been unknown to art since the time of the Greeks. I shall return to this; here I merely wish to point out that Wagner's *Rienzi* was bound to be *different* to Bulwer Lytton's, and that such a process of re-creation requires very considerable poetic ability. And I should like to make it clear that it is in consequence of this that Wagner's *Rienzi* so far excels that of Lytton. In a novel, besides the hero's trust in God, it was not possible to avoid representing him as a practical politician, a promoter of commerce, a superstitious Catholic, the lover of a rich lady, etc., and Lytton has performed his task with admirable skill. Wagner on the other hand retains only his essential features, his unconditional, fervent faith and resignation to the will of God, his enthusiastic, self-sacrificing love for his fatherland, his generosity to his enemy, his strict conscientiousness towards himself and those who belong to him. And even with the contradictions in his individuality, where we see love of display side by side with simplicity of life, pride with humility, etc., two strokes of Wagner at once reveal the secrets of his inner being. Who does not feel that we know the man *Rienzi* better, that we gain a much better insight into his soul through Wagner's drama than in the detailed portrayal and intrigues of the novel? Wagner here, like Schiller in his *Jungfrau von Orleans*, has given us a real lesson in history. For it is simply impossible to construct history, that is, history of the soul, from documents; the external events are merely the reflex; they cross and interfere with each other in every direction, and nowhere does a simple act of the will obtain pure direct expression; only the poet can dive into the inmost recesses of the heart, and show the truth in its simplicity and greatness. And now imagine the poet with music as the instrument of his expression! The prayer at the beginning of the fifth act of *Rienzi* surely tells

[1] This point is more fully discussed in an excellent essay by Eduard Reuss in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1889, p. 150.

us more about the great man than ten volumes of documentary research. It is true, as Wagner repeatedly points out, that we find in his *Rienzi* a strange neglect of diction and metre; all the better is it as a school for understanding Wagner's poetic character. We generally consider elegant versification, choice metaphors, and a succession of beautiful thoughts to be the fundamental characteristics of good poetry, but this is wrong; the fundamental characteristic of a great poet is his power to create forms. Here however the case is quite peculiar, for we have a poem, intentionally written upon the lines of an operatic libretto, and carelessly set to verse, yet containing a sublime tragedy. There is food for thought! The explanation of this very remarkable circumstance must be sought in the poetic intensity of music.

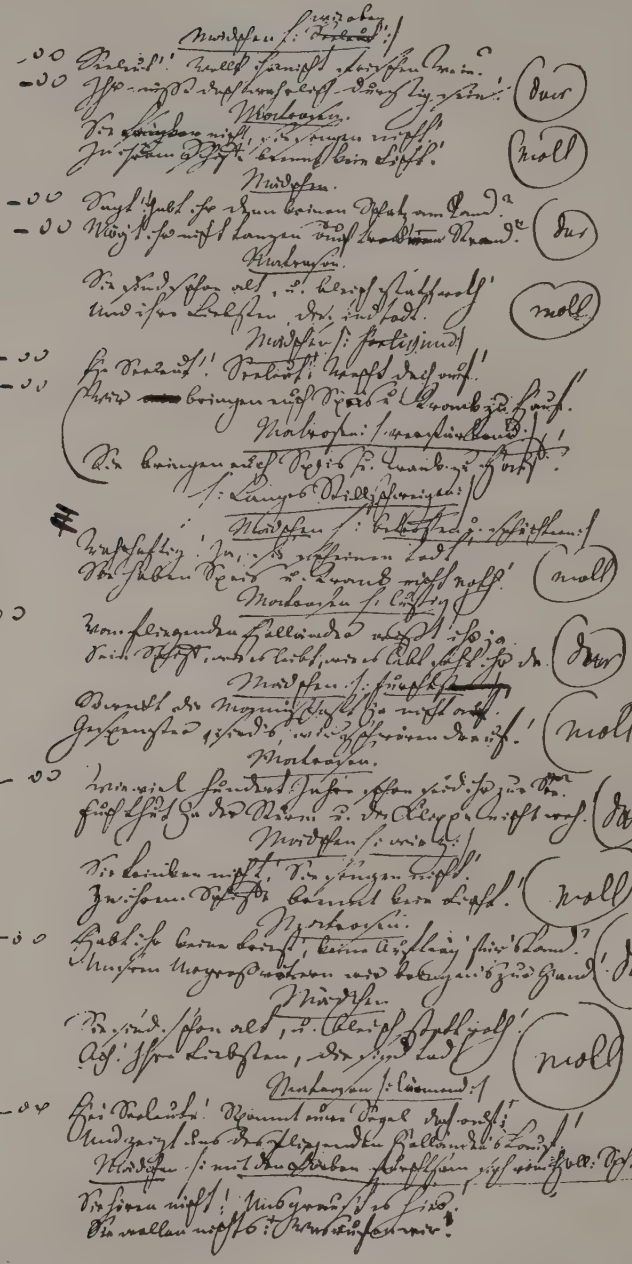
Wagner says in the introduction to the first volume of his collected works: "*Rienzi* may be regarded as a play in music; from it my new development as musical dramatist now continued." And in truth the distinctive mark of *Rienzi* in the work of Wagner's life is that the expression is almost entirely entrusted to the music. His previous stage-experiences had led him to think at that time that it was impossible to enforce the words in conjunction with music, and so he neglected the diction on which he had bestowed so much attention in his earliest attempts. The total impression did not suffer; only the main share fell to the music. The words were nothing more than an outline drawing. Everything which the poet really had to say he said in tones. Manifestly then there is a connection between *Rienzi* and the former works, *die Feen* and *das Liebesverbot*, in which, too, music is the principal element. Only in *Rienzi* a great step has been made from unconsciousness to consciousness—to borrow an expression of Wagner's own about *Lohengrin*, to which *Rienzi* is akin in so many respects—because the whole expression is deliberately and purposely laid in the music, and the diction neglected. Here therefore we see the poet, after attaining full mastership, becomes, as regards the expression, almost absolute musician. If it were possible to express a living work in a formula, that would be the formula of *Rienzi*.[1]

But to judge *Rienzi* aright, especially in its relation to Wagner's artistic development, we must compare it with the other work which came into being at the same time—*Der Fliegende Holländer*.

Der Fliegende Holländer.

Space does not permit me to speak of *der Holländer* as fully as I did of *Rienzi*. Nor is it necessary, for here, where, as Wagner writes, "he shook off the last prejudices still clinging to him from the time when he composed merely for musical instruments, and attained the definiteness of the drama" (U., 248), the poet comes too prominently into the foreground to be overlooked, or for the work to be attributed—say, for a change, to the school of Marschner. The most wonderful and almost perplexing circumstance is that two works so different as *Rienzi* and *der Holländer* should have followed one another so

[1] In my treatise, *Le drame Wagnérien* (Paris, Chailly) p. 70, *et suiv*, the relations between poem and music in *Rienzi* are discussed in more detail.



Facsimile, *der Fliegende Holländer*. Chorus from Act III. Facsimile of the MS. of 1841.

immediately that the first was scarcely completed before the other appeared (i. 4). This is the only thing we need trouble about understanding, for then we shall be able to understand the meaning of both for the biographer, *i.e.*, to see in how far they illustrate the course of Wagner's mental development; the rest, the deeper individuality of these works, must be left to the direct impression of the performance on the stage.

Wagner writes: "With the *Holländer* begins my new career as a *poet;* I was now no longer a writer of operatic libretti" (iv. 328). A sentence torn from its context may lead to serious misunderstandings, and this is just what has happened in the present case. Wagner is supposed to have admitted with these words from *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde*, that before the flying Dutchman he was not a poet but a musician, whereas it is clear that he uses the term poet in a very narrow sense, as opposed to a writer of operatic libretti. Wagner now begins to pay attention to the poetic qualities of the libretto; he brings it more forward, and no longer allows it to be hampered, as it was before, by operatic and musical considerations. The change was in no sense one of principle; this is evident from the fact that, after completing the *Holländer*, he wrote a historical opera in the style of *Rienzi*, *die Sarazenin!* It is not that Wagner was suddenly transformed by some process of magic from a musician into a poet; what he means, first and foremost, is that the musician within him grew stronger. It was the power of expression required by the musician in the "musical drama," *Rienzi*, that led to the final emancipation of the poet in the *Holländer!* Wagner himself explains the process very clearly in another passage of the *Mittheilung*, when he is speaking of the *Holländer:* "Henceforward in my dramatic capacity I was in the first place a poet; not until the poem came to be fully worked out did I again become a musician. But as a poet I fully divined the power which music possessed for enforcing my words, and I had acquired practice, and was satisfied of my own ability to employ it to express my intention; not only did I feel myself able to reckon confidently upon its support, but this very feeling *enabled me to observe more freedom in laying down my outlines in accordance with poetic necessity* than if I had designed my piece with special reference to the music. I had begun by endeavouring to acquire the faculty of musical expression in the way that one learns a language. A person speaking in a foreign language over which he has not yet attained complete mastery must consider its peculiarities in every sentence which he utters; if he wishes to be understood he must always be thinking of the expression, and this will influence him in the choice of what he shall say. . . . By this time I had finished learning the language of music. I used it like my own mother tongue . . . " (iv. 386). We see that in spite of the extraordinary contrast between the pompous, massive, five-act opera, *Rienzi*, and the unadorned, almost austere *Holländer*, with its "one act," there exists a very close relationship between them.

I shall have to return to the *Holländer* when I come to speak of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin;* here I only wish to correct the misapprehensions which are

abroad about *Rienzi*, a work that has rightly been described as marking a turning point in the history of art, and to lay special emphasis upon the dependence of Wagner's first *poetical* work (*der Holländer*) upon his most characteristically *musical* work (*Rienzi*). *Rienzi* is the turning point of his artistic development. Once it is rightly understood, we shall have gained a complete, and at the same time a critical, understanding of all the works of the first half of his life, both those which went before and those which came after.

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4. *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*

Dates. These two works resemble the last in one respect, namely in having been conceived almost simultaneously. Immediately after the completion of *der Holländer* the forms of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* appeared before Wagner's poetic vision; this was in Paris, in the summer of 1841. They were not new to him; he had known them from his childhood. It was an inner psychic process which led him to return to them now that they were assimilated and had become a part of his own artistic soul. A few years later he was able to give them to the world in his two immortal masterworks, as newly created and newly formed myths. In the biographical chapter of this work we saw how Wagner's residence abroad awakened in him a longing for everything German. It was no accident that brought the old stories back again into his hands; the same process of artistic development which had brought him the flying Dutchman now led him once for all "to select his subjects from the domain of legend, instead of from that of history" (vii. 161). The artist creates from inner necessity; one curious fact shows how slight a value he attaches to external circumstances. Wagner, whose extraordinary powers of memory remained unimpaired to the last, relates various things about *Tannhäuser* which our students of German literature attribute to a lapse of memory on his part. He says in his *Mittheilung*, written in 1851, that the first suggestion for his drama was received from "the German *Volksbuch Tannhäuser*." But there is no *Volksbuch Tannhäuser*.[1] Then again he writes: "One circumstance possessed an irresistible attraction for me, namely, the connection into which *Tannhäuser* was brought in the *Volksbuch* with the *Sängerkrieg*, or Singer's war on the Wartburg—though it is true that the connection was a very loose one." The experts however declare that no account exists in which these two legends are brought into connection together, however loosely, and that this feature of *Tannhäuser*, so essential to the action, is Wagner's own free, original creation. I merely mention this in passing in order to show by one striking example the uselessness of hunting for sources. The source of a work of art is the artist's own heart. If the Germanists and mythologists of our day wish to learn of Wagner, they are

[1] Professor Doctor Wolfgang Golther in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1889, p. 141.

wise, but never let them suppose that his works require scientific interpretation, either to show how they originated, or to assist them in producing their full effect. Wagner completed the first sketch of his *Tannhäuser* in the summer of 1842, before the rehearsals had begun for *Rienzi*. This is another very interesting fact, and shows how purely internal was the whole course of his development. For it shows that before a single work of his was performed, before he had had any opportunity of witnessing and judging of its effect, he had already completed four operas, each possessing a sharply-defined individuality, and strongly contrasted together, whilst a fifth, *Tannhäuser*, was fully sketched out on paper, and a sixth, *Lohengrin*, was ready conceived in his mind. The whole of his artistic activity during this first half of his life, from *die Feen* to *Lohengrin*, showing as it does a gradual approach to a goal not yet distinctly realized, is therefore an inner process, a process in the heart and in the head of the great poet. This is partly the reason why it is all so clear. We may be thankful that his pure, vigorous, artistic nature was not thrown into contact with the outer world until the artist had ripened to full manhood, and had become quite conscious of his artistic destiny. Now, on October 20th, 1842, with the performance of *Rienzi*, the first contact took place; on the 2nd January 1843 *der Fliegende Holländer* was performed; on the 1st February of the same year Wagner was made *Kapellmeister* at the Royal Opera, and a few weeks later the poem of *Tannhäuser* was completed. Apparently the progress of *Tannhäuser* was interfered with by his official duties, but in 1844 we find him again at work, and in the spring of 1845 the score was ready. The first performance took place on October 19th, exactly three years after that of

Königlich Sächsisches Hoftheater.

Sonntag, den 19. October 1845.

Zum ersten Male:

Tannhäuser

und

der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg.

Große romantische Oper in 3 Akten, von Richard Wagner.

Personen:

Herrmann, Landgraf von Thüringen.	—	Herr Dettmer.
Tannhäuser,	Ritter und Sänger.	Herr Tichatschek.
Wolfram von Eschinbach,		Herr Mitterwurzer.
Walter von der Vogelweide,		Herr Schloß.
Biterolf,		Herr Wächter.
Heinrich der Schreiber,		Herr Curry.
Reimar von Zweter,		Herr Risse.
Elisabeth, Nichte des Landgrafen.	—	Dem. Wagner.
Venus.	—	Mad. Schröder-Devrient.
Ein junger Hirt.	—	Dem. Thiele.

Thüringische Ritter, Grafen und Edelleute.
Edelfrauen, Edelknaben.
Aeltere und jüngere Pilger.
Sirenen, Najaden, Nymphen, Bachantinnen.

Thüringen. Wartburg.
Im Anfange des 13. Jahrhunderts.

Die neuen Costüme sind nach der Anordnung des Herrn Hofschauspieler Heine gefertigt.

Textbücher sind an der Casse das Exemplar für 3 Neugroschen zu haben.

Montag, den 20. October: Richard's Wanderleben. Lustspiel in 4 Akten, von Kettel. Hierauf: Tanz-Divertissement.

Das Sonntags-Abonnement ist bei der heutigen Vorstellung aufgehoben.

Erhöhete Einlaß-Preise:

Ein Billet in die Logen des ersten Ranges und das Amphitheater . . .	1	Thlr.	10 Ngr.
" " " " Fremdenlogen des zweiten Ranges Nr. 14. und 29. .	1	"	10 "
" " " " übrigen Logen des zweiten Ranges	1	"	— "
" " " " Sperr-Sitze der Mittel- u. Seiten-Gallerie des dritten Ranges	—	"	20 "
" " " " Mittel- und Seiten-Logen des dritten Ranges . . .	—	"	12½ "
" " " " Sperr-Sitze der Gallerie des vierten Ranges	—	"	10 "
" " " " Mittel-Gallerie des vierten Ranges	—	"	8 "
" " " " Seiten-Gallerie-Logen daselbst	—	"	5 "
" " " " Sperr-Sitze im Cercle	1	"	— "
" " " " Parquet-Logen	1	"	— "
" " " das Parterre	—	"	15 "

Die Billets sind nur am Tage der Vorstellung gültig, und zurückgebrachte Billets werden nur bis Mittag 12 Uhr an demselben Tage angenommen.

Der Verkauf der Billets gegen sofortige baare Bezahlung findet in der, in dem untern Theile des Kunstbaues befindlichen Expedition, auf der rechten Seite, nach der Elbe zu, früh von 9 bis Mittags 12 Uhr, und Nachmittags von 3 bis 4 Uhr statt.

Alle zur heutigen Vorstellung bestellte und zugesagte Billets sind Vormittags von früh 9 bis längstens 11 Uhr abzuholen, außerdem darüber anders verfügt wird.

Freibillets sind bei der heutigen Vorstellung nicht gültig.

Einlaß um 5 Uhr. Anfang um 6 Uhr. Ende nach 9 Uhr.

FACSIMILE. PROGRAMME OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF *TANNHÄUSER*.

Rienzi. In the summer of 1845, that is to say, before *Tannhäuser* was performed, the sketch of *Lohengrin* was ready. The poem was written in the spring of 1846, and the music composed between the summer of 1846 and that of 1847. It was not until he came to Vienna in 1861 that Wagner himself heard it performed; in the interval he had finished *Tristan und Isolde* and half of the *Nibelungen;* during this time, too, his development was an inner one; for it was then that he took his last step from the unconscious to the conscious.

The history of the progress of these two works, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, of how they were translated into foreign languages, and spread through nearly the whole world, belongs to the history of our times rather than to a biography of Wagner, especially as the *operas* which have achieved such unexampled popularity are quite different things from the *dramas* which Wagner intended. Those who have only seen *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* on operatic stages do not know the works themselves, but only a distorted version of them; in saying this I am not merely expressing an individual view of my own, which might perhaps be regarded as fanatical; it is only what Wagner said himself many times over. Of the first performances of *Tannhäuser* in Dresden he declares the recollection of them is "horrible" (U., 233), and of other performances of the same work he writes in vol. ix., p. 253, of his *Gesammelte Schriften:* "I think I must modestly confess that the success which my *Tannhäuser* has attained in the German theatres is exclusively due to the lyric elements which it contains. The performances which I have witnessed have invariably led me to the humiliating conclusion that the *Tannhäuser* which I had conceived had not been represented at all, but only a few things gathered here and there from my score, whilst the greater part, namely the drama, had been put aside as superfluous." Wagner writes to Roeckel that the performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* "were entirely devoid of artistic interest" for him; to Liszt: "In handing over *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* to the theatrical speculators I have cast them off; they shall be under the curse of having to beg for me, and to bring me money!" Again and again Wagner begs his friends not to speak to him about the performances of his works; on March 1st, 1870, he says, "my only wish with regard to all performances of my works is that I may hear nothing about them," and in 1878 he writes from Bayreuth: "If the outside world feels vexed at the performances of my works in the great cities, let me assure it that I have no pleasure from them" (x. 33). The only thing which the wide popularity of his works does prove is the magic power possessed by his music, and the mysterious ineffable might of perfect harmonious beauty which, like the eye of *Siegfried*, "shines glorious upon us e'en through the mask of lies." Not till quite recently, in 1891, 1892, and 1894 have there been performances of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* on the Bayreuth stage as Wagner intended them; I shall speak of these in my fourth chapter. In illustration of Wagner's attitude, which may not be quite intelligible at once to everybody, I will relate his own experiences in Zurich. At the request of the theatrical authorities he had

TANNHÄUSER IN THE CAVE OF VENUS

his *Fliegender Holländer* performed there in 1852, and he writes to Uhlig: "The very first performance convinced me that I should have to give up all the illusions which I had entertained about the *drama*, and content myself with the small element of *opera* which the work contains." And in another part of the same letter he says that the *Holländer* would "produce a considerable effect as an opera." If that was the author's own experience, if he himself was unable to bring our operatic theatres to understand even the simple drama of the *Holländer*, we may easily conceive how the case stood with his *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* in other theatres, where they were studied and put into scene by conductors and stage managers possessing no notion of Wagner's dramatic intents. What I wish to accentuate here is therefore not the triumphant success of these works, but rather the fact that, as Wagner himself says, "their success is due to a misunderstanding," the fact that the world does not yet know these two magnificent dramas, for the most part scarcely even dreams of what they are. The old phrase, once so common, is still very often heard: "I can follow as far as *Lohengrin*, but no further." That is a pure illusion of innocent souls. Whoever thinks this does not even follow as far as *die Feen*, or—who knows?—perhaps not even as far as the first pastoral play. He is simply a man infected with the opera, one who intoxicates himself on every melody, under whatever pretence it is offered to him; the deformed, mutilated *Lohengrin* is good enough for him. But the noble drama *Lohengrin*, the work of Richard Wagner, which belongs to the undying, eternally beautiful creations of the human mind of *that* he has not the faintest idea, or he could never utter words so fulsome, so senseless, so revolting!

Attitude of the critics.

One more remark I must make with regard to the enormous popularity of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. The present generation imagines that only Wagner's later works met with opposition, not the earlier ones, and from this hypothesis the most various inferences are drawn, such as their being difficult to comprehend, etc. The contrary would be nearer the truth. The public, when unprejudiced, has indeed received every work with enthusiasm, provided that it was well performed; *Tristan* as well as *Tannhäuser*, *die Meistersinger* as well as *Lohengrin;* but *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* had a much longer and much more bitter conflict to sustain against the critics and musical cliques than had any later work. Even with the "opera" *Rienzi* it fared no better, for when it was given in Berlin in 1847 the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, after speaking of the great success which it had met with, continues: "Nevertheless the opera will scarcely keep its place in our repertoire, for the critics have begun a campaign in force against it." Does anyone wish to know what the campaign of the critics was like? Here is a specimen: "The people are now driven into the opera by policemen, so that *Rienzi* may not be given before empty benches. The proposal has already been made to send the Polish prisoners to see *Rienzi*. . . . Myroslawsky is said to have turned quite pale with fright when the decision to force him to confess by sending him to *Rienzi* was communicated to

him. In this way *Rienzi* may yet be good for something" (*Signale*, November 1847). Such was the tone of the press towards Wagner for thirty years! The famous musical theoretician, Moritz Hauptmann, said of the *Tannhäuser* Overture: "I regard it as a complete failure, and awkwardly conceived . . . quite horrible, incomprehensible, clumsy, long and tedious. . . . When a person can compose a thing of this kind and have it printed, his qualifications for an artistic career seem to me very dubious." As late as 1870 the same "authority" described Wagner's dramas as "artistic nothings" (*Kunstnichtse*) and as "absurd twaddle in respect of metre and harmony" (*absurdes Herumgefasel im Metrischen und Harmonischen*).[1] And *Lohengrin*, the work which Liszt had described as "a single indivisible miracle . . . the highest and most perfect work of art" was still spoken of in 1866, *i.e.* twenty years after its completion, by the entire press of Berlin in language like the following: the music was called "formlessness exalted to a principle . . . frosty whining (Tongewinsel) which chills both the head and the heart . . . an abyss of tediousness . . . void of melody (!) . . . one's feeling for what is noble and worthy in art revolts against such an insult to the inner being of music," etc. Whilst the public was flocking to the performances, the critics wrote: "Neither the mystic character of the action, nor the uncertain, childish musical language have found any considerable circle of admirers."[2] One piece of ironical wit remains stereotyped for more than thirty years: "The much extolled beauties of Wagner's works can only be discerned and enjoyed by a limited number of the elect." We first meet with it in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1846, in reference to *Tannhäuser*. At last the critics had to give way about *Tannhäuser;* and so they wrote: "The real favour which has been bestowed upon *Tannhäuser* is now shared by *Lohengrin*, in so far as . . . but yet . . . etc., etc." At last however they admitted that *Lohengrin* too was a master-work, even a work of genius—it took the greatest German papers on an average twenty-five years to arrive at this! But *Tristan!* that, certainly, they thought was a great mistake. Later still *Tristan* was admitted to be a master-work; but the *Ring* was an undoubted "monstrosity." And so it went on, the majority of individuals following the newspapers and talking in the same strain. The well-known historian of art, Wilhelm Lübke, for instance, happened to witness a performance—a single one—of *die Meistersinger* in Mannheim, and at once proclaimed in one of the most widely read papers in Germany: "the whole score in not worth a single song of Gumbert!" I mention all these wretched details merely to show that the opposition to Wagner never came from the public, but invariably from the critics and the leading "artistic circles." The strong feeling against Wagner, which was shared by so many educated people, and the nonsense still talked about his works and his personality, are the artificial product of a paper war;

[1] The periodical which published this nonsense was the *Grenzboten*.

[2] Fuller quotations will be found in Tappert's *Richard Wagner*, p. 57, etc. They are all taken from the great Berlin papers.

this fact should help to open our eyes as to the value of the press. It is, however, important for us to realize that while *Lohengrin* was violently attacked for about a quarter of a century, *Tristan*, after having been first received with abuse unspeakable, became in ten years the favourite of the public in Munich; the *Ring* passed in triumph over all the larger stages, not only of Germany but of all Europe, within five years of its first performance, while with *Parsifal* people flocked from the very beginning from every corner of the world to hear it in Bayreuth. There is no truth whatever in the stories of the earlier works having met with less opposition than the later ones.

These stories have a close connection with another assertion often heard and equally untenable, namely that up to *Lohengrin* Wagner wrote very fine operas, but that afterwards he became involved in "misty theories" with regard to his "synthetic art," that he was seized with a mania for reform, etc., etc. All this is pure imagination; there is no such thing as a break or a disturbance in the continuity of Wagner's artistic development. We have seen how in the first four works which he wrote for the stage he followed his own instinctive impulse, namely his desire to express exactly that which called for expression in his poetic heart; we have seen how, step by step, he approached the goal that was before him; no two of these works are alike; each is a new and independent link in the chain. With *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* the chain was ended: "it was the completed *Tannhäuser*, and more especially the completed *Lohengrin*, which brought to my mind a clear understanding of the ends to which my unconscious instinct was leading me" (Letter to Liszt of May 22, 1851). His entire mental development took place with strict logical consistency, even when the progress was quite instinctive, from one positive experience to another. I know of nothing similar in the history of art, and can only explain the phenomenon by the extraordinary energy of Wagner's character, which kept him isolated from the world and surrounded by the atmosphere of his own deeds and aspirations. Nor is there any break between *Lohengrin* and the great works of his second epoch; he has become, to use his own expression, perfectly clear to himself, that is, not as to any *new* ideal, or any form of art to be achieved, but as to that which he has already achieved. The *tendency*, which he is supposed to have shown only in his later works, really began with the tragedy of his school years and the pastoral play. Now, after the completion of *Lohengrin*, or rather, as we shall see, a little later, he looks back with conscious knowledge upon the whole course of his work; now for the first time he understands himself and becomes master of the inner necessity; though still subject to it, he no longer allows himself to be blindly led; in his full, conscious mastership, he is himself able to point out the way. It would be a strange proceeding for us to admire the works of his first epoch just in the degree in which they show an approach to free conscious mastership, and then disapprove of the mature productions of his manhood! Just as strange is the opposite view, very common just at present in France, namely that all the works before *Tristan* possess only historical

value; this is narrow inartistic dogmatism; it is as if one should decree that the flower is more lovely than the bud, that the smiling child and the enthusiastic youth deserve no consideration beside the man. Wagner says somewhere that *die Meistersinger* is easier to perform well than *Tannhäuser;* perhaps too it is easier fully to realize the beauty of his last works than that of his early ones. The early works are like buds; much in them is undeveloped and concealed; in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* they begin to expand into blossom, and these two works in particular unite the charms of unconscious youth with those of mastery achieved.

Biographical significance of these works.

With *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* we enter a field which has already been very fully exploited. All the earliest authors on Wagner—Liszt, Müller, Pohl —have written pamphlets on *Tannhäuser*. Commentaries from the standpoint of folk-lore, of history, of music and of poetry have never ceased to appear from 1849 to the present day. Such a circumstance is highly noteworthy, and although this immense mass of literature undoubtedly contains some things of little value, and though at the present day it is much mixed up with speculation, there is also much that is very beautiful and profound, from the work of Liszt to that of Ferdinand Pfohl. The same is true of *Lohengrin.* Many people scoff at the Wagner literature, but it would be more profitable to note how deep and enduring are the impressions received from Wagner's works, and how they awaken a desire for more and deeper knowledge. I have myself no intention of making essays in interpretation; for *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* the reader is referred once for all to the essays by Liszt.[1] Far more important than these experiments is what Wagner himself tells us about the origin of the works in *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde.* He here unites purely artistic matter with the inmost experiences of his soul, and unfolds a picture of his own progress such as he alone could have given. The work is perhaps the most impressive that has issued from his pen, and I will not try to dissect it; the reader should peruse it himself. It only remains for me to say a few words regarding the place of *Tännhauser* and *Lohengrin* in the *Meister's* artistic development, as I did with the previous works.

Not long after the completion of *Lohengrin* Wagner wrote in a letter: "I started on my course as a *musician*, who, convinced of the inexhaustible wealth of music, desired the highest art-work, *i.e.* the drama."[2] In the passage from the flying Dutchman which I quoted at the close of the last section he says: "I was a poet, conscious of the power of music to express my poetic intentions." It is very clear that musician and poet are one person, but the stronger emphasis really lies on the word musician, and he continues: "In our time, when the heroes of absolute music, *i.e.* music severed from poetry, especially Beethoven

[1] Liszt, Complete Works, iii. 2, *Richard Wagner* (Breitkopf & Härtel). The volume can be purchased separately.

[2] Letter of January 17th, 1849, to Freiherr v. Briedenfeld. It has been published in facsimile by H. Springer of Leipzig.

with his orchestra, have heightened the power of its expression till it has become something new, scarcely dreamed of before, even by Gluck, the influence of music upon the drama has become important, since it will necessarily wish to unfold its own proper wealth. The drama must therefore extend its sphere for the sake of the expression, and it seemed to me that only the musician could discover and develop its potentialities so as fully to utilize the wealth of musical expression." The words: "the drama must extend its sphere for the sake of the expression," seem to me to contain the essence of this last period in his development.

Quite naturally, that is, in the way proper to an artist, Wagner had commenced with the form which he found ready to hand, the opera; we have already seen from his earliest efforts, as well as from his entire way of poetical and musical production, that what he wanted to write was the drama, the real drama, but, being a practical man, he accepted the traditional, conventional form of the opera with its arias, cavatinas, ritornellos, duets, terzettos, and choruses at the beginning and end of every act as the framework he must of necessity adhere to. Herewith however he obviously found himself compelled to put restraint upon his desire for poetic creation, for wedding the thought to the feeling. Not only was his range narrowed as a poet, but he was forced into a path very unfavourable for "utilizing the wealth of musical expression." For music can express nothing special, fortuitous, or external, but only the inner soul. In order therefore to satisfy the natural desire of music "to unfold its wealth," the action had to be made, not richer, but on the contrary, *simpler*, and at the same time *deeper*. Here indeed, in the secret recesses of the soul, a new and measureless realm is opened out to the dramatist, but only if he be a musician, while all the pompous paraphernalia and sensational events borrowed from the melodrama and exaggerated in the opera, constituting indeed the fixed scaffolding on which it is built, are quite unsuited for unfolding the musical expression. After hearing *Rienzi*, the aged Spontini said at once of Wagner: "*C'est un homme de génie, mais déjà il a plus fait qu'il ne peut faire*"—a really true criticism; the "*homme de génie*" actually had in this case expected music to perform a task for which it was by itself unfitted; for the task was to interpret the entire drama, or at least give its entire *expression*. And in so far it is true that Wagner's entire evolution, up to *Rienzi*, had followed a false direction, but it had enriched the experience of the artist by showing him that his way was a wrong one, and not only this, but it rendered him a positive service, in enabling him to attain full mastery in using the musical expression. And it was just this mastery of the musical means which enabled him to "extend the sphere of the drama," to "discover and develop its potentialities so as fully to utilize the wealth of musical expression." Not until Wagner was fully matured as a musician could his dream of the highest art-work, *i.e.* the drama, become reality.

I hope that I shall not be considered guilty of artistic dogmatism if I speak of these works, *der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* as those in

which the potentialities of the drama as discerned by the musician were developed, and the drama itself extended, though it may be that the process was half unconscious, and therefore rather tentative than deliberate. Leaving for a moment the inner and absolute value of these works, as art works, out of account, their significance for Wagner's intellectual development seems to me clearly to lie in this gradual extension of the sphere of the drama.

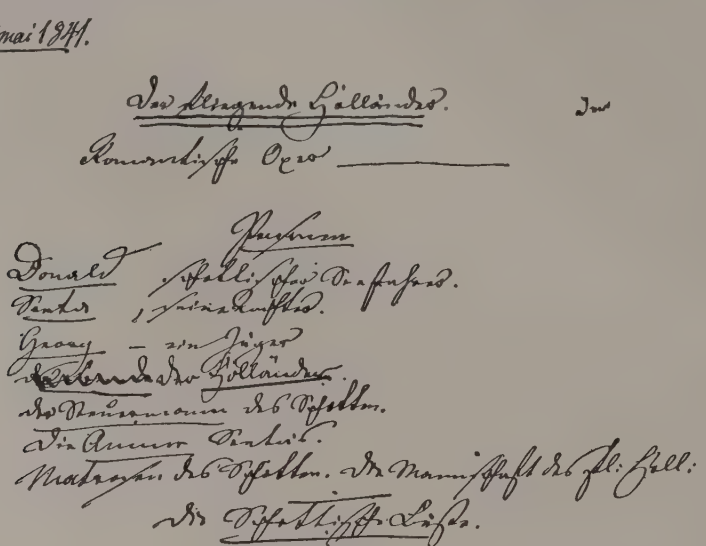
We have Wagner's own authority for saying that *Tannhäuser* is a great advance upon *der Fliegende Holländer*, and *Lohengrin* upon *Tannhäuser*. I would not however lay too much weight upon this, for as Schopenhauer finely says: "Art is everywhere at its goal." Still the gradual perfecting of the form, that is, the gradual departure from the operatic pattern and adoption of the new form of the drama, as determined by the subject-matter alone, is too striking to be overlooked. "In my *Fliegender Holländer* I was unconsciously influenced by my knowledge of the traditional form of the opera, and everyone who attentively follows the action will notice that many scenes were determined by this consideration; it was only gradually that I was able to overcome the influence of the operatic form, first in *Tannhäuser*, but still more decidedly in *Lohengrin;* that is to say, as my experience of the nature of my subject became clearer, so did I learn to adapt the form more and more closely to the peculiar requirements of the subject-matter and the situation" (iv. 392). The form of the representation consists naturally of two parts, the poem and the music.

How gradual was the process in the *poem* can be seen very clearly. In the first manuscript of the poem of the *Fliegender Holländer* (dated Meudon, 18th May to 28th May 1841)[1] which is almost identical with the final version as we know it,[2] not only is the visible external division into scenes retained, but the three scenes of the first act for instance are entitled "Introduction," "Aria," and "Scena, duet, and chorus"; the close of the second act, from the entry of the Dutchman, is entitled "Scena, duet, and terzet," and so on. However freely the musician may move within the bounds which he has set himself, these titles show very decided signs of the formalism of the opera. The commencement of each of the three acts with a chorus is also an operatic mannerism; in his subsequent works he scarcely ever opened an act with a chorus. Far more important than these purely formal marks of want of individuality is another feature of the poem, which Wagner himself indicates as a weakness. Two qualities are necessary to a good drama, first the exact definition of its object, secondly its exhaustive treatment. Wagner says that the *Holländer* contains "much that is unclear; the situations not sharply defined," everything is drawn "in broad and vague outlines." To some perhaps

[1] I am indebted to the late Herr Alexander Ritter for having kindly allowed me to peruse this manuscript.

[2] Except that the scene is laid on the Scottish coast, instead of on the Norwegian, and some of the names are different in consequence. Daland is Donald, and Erik, Georg. In the still earlier prose sketch the heroine is called Anna, not Senta!

this criticism will appear too severe; at least the principal motive, the redemption of the sinner by the love of the chaste maiden, "true until death," stands



Facsimile from the First Manuscript of the Poem of *der Fliegende Holländer*.

out in very clear relief. It is true, however, that this mighty dramatic motive is not exhaustively treated, and herein lies the inherent weakness of the poem. Wagner did not yet know what he saw so clearly afterwards, namely that the aid of music "would swell the breath of the poetry to a fulness unknown before" (ii. 185). *Der Fliegende Holländer* is true, deep poetry, the work is a *drama* in the fullest sense of the word, and the figure of the "pale seaman" stands out so grandly and distinctly that it may compare with any of Wagner's later ones, and with any in the whole of dramatic art. Still the work is no more than a sketch, for the distinguishing mark of the new drama is that it can exhaustively represent the processes of the inmost soul, the emotional substance of the thoughts, and this is not done in the *Holländer*. The inner man, and with him the music, are neglected; the poet has created forms specially with reference to them, but there he leaves them; he has only half emerged from the swaddling clothes of the opera, and can not yet trust himself to move freely in his own proper domain. The "potentialities of the drama answering to the wealth of musical expression," and their necessary "extension," are as yet only a vision, and have not been clearly recognized. A clear understanding of the *Holländer*, with all its advantages and defects, is necessary before we can arrive at a critical estimate of the poems of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, and especially their position as steps in his progress to the conscious achievement of the new drama. It is, in fact, all that is wanted, and will make an analysis of the glorious works which followed it unnecessary. In them he departs further

and further from the operatic pattern, and approaches the perfect form of the word-tone-drama. The principle of this form is "to concentrate the action into a few important and decisive incidents of the development; the scenes should be few, and each should present some distinct emotional mood, treating it exhaustively; the poet should, from the very first conception of the scene, leave himself scope to linger in it until its subject is fully exhausted" (see iv. 391). Few incidents, and each treated fully, this is the principle which gradually comes to be more and more consciously enforced in the three works we are now considering. The smaller number of the incidents is all the more conspicuous in *Der Fliegende Holländer* owing to the contrast which it presents in this respect to the overloading of *Rienzi;* what is lacking is their exhaustive treatment. In *Tannhäuser* the dramatic incidents are much more numerous, but in the whole of the second and third acts we find an exhaustive treatment of the motives, that is of the inner action, such as Wagner had never ventured upon before.[1] The progress made in the release from operatic formulas is very striking; the whole work contains only one duet; never once are the choruses introduced in mere operatic caprice, as they are for instance in the spinner-maidens' chorus in the *Holländer;* they always possess some high dramatic significance. In *Lohengrin* one might perhaps suppose that a reversion to the old ways could be detected, especially in the numerous choruses, when one hears them on our ordinary operatic stages. But the performance in Bayreuth conveys quite a different impression of these choruses, and of their dramatic meaning. And if we regard the work as a whole we must admit it to be a perfect marvel; an action involving many more secondary motives than Wagner would have suffered at a later period, an action requiring from its very conception a richer and more operatic treatment, is here reduced to a few such simple and easily intelligible incidents that a child could understand it at once. The most competent judges have declared that the whole literature of the world contains no such clear, simple, and at the same time intensely dramatic exposition as the first act of *Lohengrin.*! And here I must take the opportunity of making a passing remark upon the part played by the eye in Wagner's dramas. A deaf person will follow all the main lines of the action of *Lohengrin* by the mere impression of the stage pictures. That brings us to one of the most important characteristics of the new dramatic form. Music namely can express nothing fortuitous, nothing in the nature of intrigue, or arbitrary convention, but only the purely human, that which is common to all, and intelligible to all without any special explanation. The more, therefore, a drama confines itself to simple, purely human motives, the more *visible* will the action become. Eye and ear support each other, and we learn the meaning of Wagner's words: "I would like to call my dramas deeds of music become visible" (ix. 364). To the purely human, as the only legitimate subject of the word-tone-drama I shall return; here I merely wish, without drawing any

[1] The full development of the motive in the first act took place when the Venusberg scene was recast in 1860; herewith the dramatic balance was restored.

theoretical conclusions, to point out that Wagner's dramas become more and more visible, more and more *living*, if I may so speak, as they go on. He is the seer, who as his artistic powers increase, succeeds in projecting a more and more perfect reflection of the picture within him upon the stage.[1] And now we see how much truth there is in the famous criticism that Wagner is neither a great poet nor a great musician, but a grand scenic genius; for the man who could put *such* a series of pictures on the stage as that which makes up the visible body of the *Lohengrin* drama must have seen them first with his inner eye, and he who can do that possesses the highest of all poetic gifts, that of creating forms. All true poetry, from that of Homer to that of Dickens, is seeing. To say of a man that he possesses genius in seeing, but that he is no poet, is a *contradictio in adjecto* as complete as any that we can imagine. In *Lohengrin* we have a drama bordering on the historical and massive reduced to its simplest and purely human motives, which then are treated in a manner almost completely exhaustive. And we see how in these three works, *der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, the musician gradually expands the "potentialities of the drama, answering to the musical expression."

Turning now to the music, we may observe a progress of exactly the same kind, commencing with the *Holländer;* nor could it have been otherwise, when poet and musician were one and the same person seeking expression. I have already quoted Wagner's words: "With the *Holländer* begins my new career as poet; I was now no longer a writer of operatic libretti."[2] With equal justice he might have said that he now began his career as dramatic musician, and that he was no longer a writer of operatic *music.* Both statements are in some degree one-sided, and must be accepted with caution. Wagner was a poet from the very beginning, and from the very beginning he had a desire to impart a symphonic unity and form to his musical composition. Even in the early attempt, *die Hochzeit*, we found a pronounced musical-poetic motive, eminently suited for symphonic treatment,[3] and in *Rienzi* this instinctive tendency was continued. But it was not yet a symphonic web, spread over the entire drama, at once completing the external unity, and conveying the internal unity of the action directly to the feelings. I will relate the further progress of the development from this point in Wagner's own words: "The process had never been employed before, that is, not uniformly through the whole drama, and I arrived at it, not by reflection, but solely by practical experience, and by means of my artistic purpose. I remember that before I passed to the actual execution of *der Fliegende Holländer*, I had sketched out the ballad of Senta in the second act, and composed the words and the melody. In this piece I had unconsciously laid the thematic germ of the whole music of the opera; it was the condensed image of the entire drama, as it appeared before my soul; and when the work was finished I felt half inclined to call it a 'dramatic ballad.' At last, when I passed to the composition, the thematic picture which I had

[1] See Chap. ii. sect. 4, p. 199. [2] See p. 253. [3] See p. 237.

conceived spread itself quite naturally like a web over the entire drama; I found that I had only to allow the thematic germs contained in the ballad to develop in their own natural way, to obtain all the principal moods of the poem in definite thematic form. It would have been a most arbitrary and capricious proceeding, like that of an operatic composer, if I had invented new motives to convey the same identical mood whenever it returned: and as my object was not to put together a conglomerate of opera pieces, but to represent my subject in the most intelligible way, I felt no temptation whatever to do so. In *Tannhäuser* the process was the same, and in *Lohengrin* too; only that here I had not a complete musical piece, like the ballad in the *Holländer*, before my mind, but rather a *picture* in which the thematic rays were concentrated, a picture which had grown organically out of and with the scenes, and appearing in varied form according as it was required by the principal situations of the drama.[1] And especially in *Lohengrin* my method gained more and more definite artistic form by repeated metamorphosis of thematic material in accordance with the character of the situations; the effect of this was to introduce greater variety into the music than was to be found for instance in the *Holländer*, where the return of the theme was often a mere reminiscence, and was more like the way in which motives had been employed by other composers" (iv. 393). Such is the process by which the symphonic tissue grew, with its wonderful foundation of thematic phrases, inaptly called "leading motives," which have been so cruelly dissected and robbed of their poetic fragrance. No less important is the composition of the other element of the musical body, the *verse melody* (*Sprachversmelodie*, as Wagner called it): "The melody must grow quite spontaneously out of the words; in itself, as pure melody, it ought not to attract attention, but only in so far as it is the sensible expression of a feeling clearly defined in the words" (iv. 396). Here too the release from the conventional melody of the opera was gradual; in the *Holländer* Wagner admits that the language is much influenced by a traditional style of melody; in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* he gradually overcame this influence. Hand in hand with these achievements the main principles of harmonic characterization, of choice of key and instrumentation, were also developed; these two were not determined by arbitrary caprice, but were conditioned by the new style which proceeded of organic necessity out of the new drama, and differed from those of absolute music in just the same degree as the spoken drama differed from the silent pantomime.

For further information regarding these questions of musical technique I must refer the reader to Wagner's own writings,[2] and for *Tannhäuser* and

[1] ". . . das Bild, in welches die thematischen Strahlen zusammenfielen aus der Gestaltung der Szenen, aus ihrem organischen Wachsen aus sich, selbst erst schuf, und in wechselnder Gestalt überall *da* es erscheinen liess, wo es für das Verständniss der Hauptsituationen nöthig war."

[2] Especially to the often quoted *Mittheilung an meine Freunde* (1851), and to the essay *Ueber die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama* (On the application of music to the Drama) (1879). Of all the writers on Wagner, M. Alfred Ernst is probably the one who has made the greatest advance in

Lohengrin in particular to the essays of Franz Liszt, where even the non-musician may learn to understand the wondrous structure of the musical edifice from Liszt's detailed analysis of instrumentation, harmony and melody. One thing will be clear even to those who are not at home in musical technique, namely that these various and incisive innovations were bound to lead to ever greater perfection of form in the music. For form attains perfection just in the degree in which it is released from the arbitrary will of the creating artist, and is forced upon his mind as the only adequate expression of the subject matter. In the opera the arbitrary will of the composer reigns almost supreme; its law is: "*Car tel est mon bon plaisir.*" So-called operatic form is a pattern, arbitrarily fixed, and neither is nor ever was a real artistic form. Wagner had to create the form for his word-tone-drama from the very beginning, *i.e.* not to invent it, but to find it. He is called a reformer of the opera; a more misleading appellation could scarcely be found for the man who discovered whilst he was yet young that "we can only achieve what is right by a complete reversion of the procedure followed hitherto in the opera." Even in *Lohengrin* he had wrought out his own completely new form, such as had never been dreamed of in the opera, and brought it to such perfection that Liszt could write: "The distinguishing feature of the music of this opera is unity of conception and style; there is not a single melodic phrase, still less an *ensemble*, nor indeed a passage of any kind, the peculiar nature and true meaning of which would be understood if it were separated from its connection with the whole work. Every part connects, binds together and enhances the rest. All is of a piece, and so united that the parts cannot be torn asunder."[1] The more complete the unity in Wagner's works, the nearer they approached to absolute perfection of form, the more did the musicians talk of formlessness, arbitrariness, iconoclasm, etc. The most grotesque and monstrous piece of stupidity has already been quoted, namely that the *Lohengrin* music is "formlessness exalted to a principle." And people appealed not only to their idol the operatic pattern, and found that the principle of division into single rounded off numbers (the very thing which destroyed the form as a whole) was nowhere observed, but they also appealed to the traditional school of instrumental music, from which Wagner had so conspicuously departed. These critics could not and would not comprehend that Wagner's works were governed by *law*, whilst instrumental music was under arbitrary *tyranny!* People who persisted in regarding the drama as secondary could never be brought to see that with Wagner every modulation was not only justified but actually prescribed by the action. My object in referring to these blind critics is to draw the reader's attention to the fact that nothing is more admirable in Wagner's works than the perfection of the form. It is clear that this quality will show itself most strik-

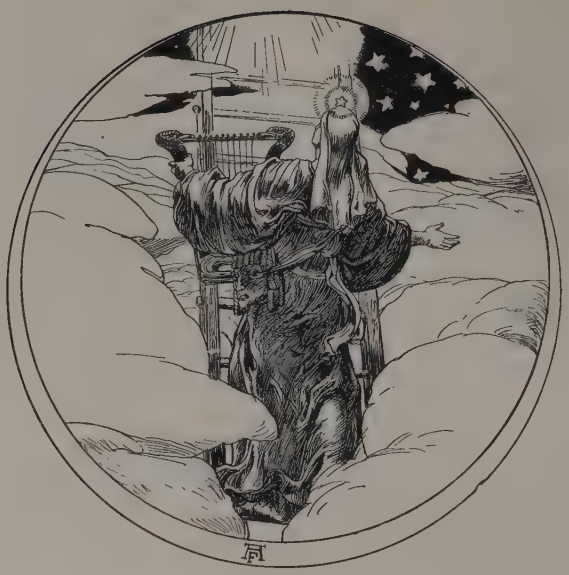
this department, and who is most trustworthy. His principal work, *L'art de Richard Wagner* (Vol. I., *L'œuvre poétique*, Vol. II., *L'œuvre musicale*), can be warmly recommended to all who wish to follow the hidden properties of the musical and poetical structure in Wagner's dramas.

[1] Liszt, *Gesammelte Schriften*, iii. (2), p. 137.

ingly in the music. In one respect Wagner is perhaps the only man who can be compared with Johann Sebastian Bach; in both we find excessive boldness, sometimes almost roughness of musical expression, united with technical finish perfect in every part, down to the minutest and apparently most trifling detail, so that their scores look more like the marvels of Nature than like products of the human brain. One is almost deceived into believing the element of arbitrary creation to be wholly absent.

From the standpoint of pure biography then we may regard *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* as the works in which the new direction, namely, that of the conscious *extension of the drama*, commenced in the flying Dutchman is continued and brought to high perfection as regards both the poetic and the musical expression. From the very first, from the time of *die Feen*, the musician was always a little ahead of the poet. In the following section I will show how Wagner attained full and clear insight into the choice and treatment of the poetic material after the completion of *Lohengrin*. The last step of the poet to the conscious perception of a new dramatic form could not take place until the composer had attained full mastership; this will now be clear to the reader without further explanation, and he attained this mastership in *Lohengrin*.

Scene from *Tannhäuser*, by Professor M. Brückner in Coburg.



The Four Great Sketches

As long as the artist is devising and selecting means his work is not yet art; his procedure is rather that of science, seeking and examining by artificial processes, and therefore erring. Not until the choice has fallen, and has fallen of necessity, not until the artist has found himself again in his object, just as the perfect man finds himself again in Nature, will the art-work step into life and become something real, direct and self-determining.

RICHARD WAGNER.

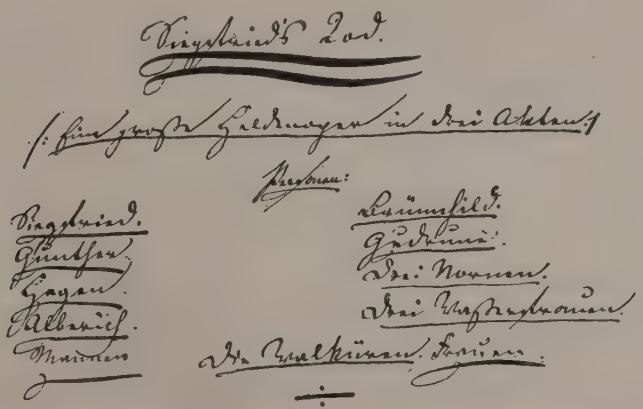
Is the opera possible?

IN August 1847 Wagner had completed his *Lohengrin*. He was still far from realizing the fact that in this work he had cast off the old operatic form and created a new form of the drama. Whilst the composition of the third act was in progress he wrote to a friend: "The works with which I am at present occupied are merely experiments to ascertain whether the opera is possible." This sentence shows, however, that a doubt had arisen! The question whether the opera is possible can only mean: "is the work which *I* desire and am striving for possible within the framework of the operatic form?" The doubt seems to have been strengthened in Wagner's mind by the completion of *Lohengrin*, for there now followed a long period of transition. Not that his

desire to create was less urgent; on the contrary, it was stronger than ever; only the manner in which it now showed itself, as it were feeling its way in different directions, points to an intense inner agitation. "With *Lohengrin* the old world of the opera is ended; the spirit moves upon the face of the waters, and there is light!" These were Liszt's words in 1858, when the light had broken, and his clear mind soon discovered the high significance of *Lohengrin*. But it was not gained without an effort. After Wagner had finished *Lohengrin*, and before he had clearly grasped the fundamental principles of the new art, and finally made up his mind to turn his back upon the opera, he still continued to occupy himself with the question whether the opera was possible, and the feverish way in which he went to work betrays the despair of the artist, as it became daily more clear to him that *his* art was impossible in the operatic frame-work. Still the demand for the coöperation of music was absolute, that is, his art required a technical apparatus only to be found on the operatic stage. This time was the crisis of his life as a dramatic poet.

Within the space of a single year, 1848, the year in which he drew up his detailed *Proposals for the Organization of a German National Theatre*, attended to politics and delivered his famous oration, we find him occupied with no less than four dramatic essays, all different in character: *Friedrich der Rotbart*, *Siegfried's Tod*, *Jesus von Nazareth*, *Wieland der Schmied*.

Friedrich der Rotbart was conceived as a grand *historical* drama, "dealing, in five acts with the career of Friedrich Barbarossa, from the diet at Roncaglia to the commencement of his crusade." This sketch has not been included in Wagner's collected works, but the result of the very extensive historical



Facsimile, from the Original Manuscript of the First Sketch for *Siegfried's Tod* (1848).

studies to which it led are preserved in his essay, "*Die Wibelungen; History drawn from Legend.*" *Siegfried's Tod* is a grand *mythological* drama, a fragment of an attempt to treat the whole Nibelungen myth dramatically. "Before I wrote *Siegfried's Tod*," Wagner afterwards wrote to Uhlig, "I sketched

out the entire myth as a grand connected whole, and I endeavoured to give the principal catastrophe of the myth, while indicating its connection with the rest; I then conceived this to be possible in our theatres" (U., 118). Both the complete text of the "grand heroic opera"[1] and the dramatic sketch of the whole myth, from the rape of the *Rheingold*, will be found in the second volume of Wagner's collected writings. *Jesus von Nazareth* has come down to us in a very interesting form;[2] there is a detailed prose sketch of the play in five acts, followed by elucidations which have little to do with the dramatic execution, and consist rather of dissertations on all the problems touched upon in the work, for instance on love, on law and sin, on death, on the divine in man, etc., and then there come numerous texts copied from the Bible with Wagner's own hand, bearing witness to a very close study of the sacred writings. It is evident that we have to do with a drama of pronounced philosophic and religious character.[3] A work of quite a different kind is *Wieland der Schmied;* it assumed definite form in 1849, and was not fully sketched out until 1850. Whether Wagner drew his material from the older Scandinavian sources, or from Simrock's recent and very free version is immaterial;[4] we have to do here, not as in *Siegfried's Tod*, with an entire myth, but with a legendary figure resembling the *Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* in one respect, namely that the sharp individualization is not injured by the symbolic background.

Wagner was therefore occupied at one and the same time with a historical, a mythological, a philosophical and (as he would once have called it) a romantic drama! To these were added new projects which seem never to have reached the stage of written sketches; amongst them a *classical* drama, Achilleus, and several *comic* subjects may be named. We see how far he was from working by any theory or system. Wagner differs from a theoretical thinker in just the same way that a discoverer of new lands differs from a professor of geography. He sought and sought and sought until he found. Then, indeed, when he had found, when to the experience he had acquired by his own work and by his wider knowledge of the works of the greatest dramatists and musicians, was added the

[1] According to the sketch in the possession of the late Alexander Ritter, the poem was commenced on the 12th November 1848, and finished on the 28th of the same month.

[2] Published by Breitkopf & Härtel (new edition, 1895).

[3] On this work see Hébert: *Le sentiment religieux dans l'œuvre de Richard Wagner*, ch. iii. Notwithstanding numerous most regrettable mistakes and erroneous conclusions, due to an imperfect acquaintance with Wagner, the work expresses the sincere admiration of a Catholic Priest, especially for the manner in which Wagner has drawn "l'auguste personnalité du Sauveur," and may be commended to the attention of those who see in *Jesus von Nazareth* nothing more than an "anarchistic drama." Prof. Muncker, too, writes very finely: "Wagner, with his supreme poetic insight and force, showed that things in which others had always failed were yet possible, and pointed out the way to achieve them. He sketched out a true drama, constructed according to the strict rules of art, on the death of Christ; a drama which could not but exercise a powerful moral, poetic, and dramatic influence," etc. (*Richard Wagner*, p. 44).

[4] See Rud. Schlösser, *Wieland der Schmied* (*Bayr. Blätter*, 1895, p. 43). Wagner's two versions will both be found in the third volume of his collected writings.

new experience gained by the inner elaboration of these numerous sketches, he felt the desire to arrange his ideas in logical form. In a letter of 1847 he writes: "Let us not underestimate the value of reflection; unconscious art belongs to periods far removed from ours; the art-work of the highest intellectual periods cannot be produced otherwise than consciously. . . . The fact that this faculty of reflection is so seldom found united in an equal degree with that of productivity explains the excessive rarity of men of genius."[1] The author of *Lohengrin* possessed this genius in a marked degree. And when the artist in him had to reject all the dramatic projects, one after the other, still the man of genius did not lose courage; but, unable to trust his art to blind chance, he made a mighty effort, and brought the light of his reason to bear upon the works and schemes which had grown so luxuriantly from the fulness of his creative faculty. In 1849-51 he composed the brilliant series of writings laying down the foundations of his views on art, from *die Kunst und die Revolution* to *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde.* The most important result for himself of his work as a writer was, as he said, not the impression which his writings made upon the world, but the clear view which he gained himself (U., 187). The close connection between the dramatic sketches of this period of the crisis of his artistic life and the writings of the same period is evident. "My literary works," he writes to Roeckel, "bore witness to my want of freedom as an artist; I only composed them under the severest pressure, and it would have killed me to continue them" (R., 10). The exuberance of the creative faculty had forced the artist to take refuge in theoretical reasoning, the faculty of healthy limitation so dear to Goethe. The material for his reflection was drawn from the sketches.

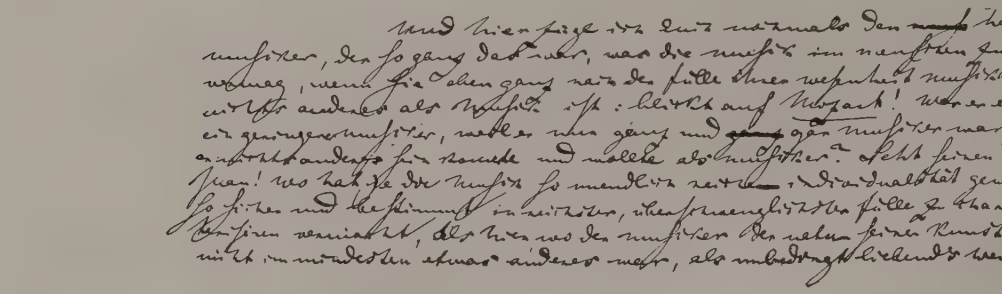
From unconsciousness to consciousness.

If then we are to remain true to the principle laid down at the beginning of this book, and abstain from all critical judgment upon the absolute value of the sketches as art-works—which is the easier owing to their being unfinished—their biographical interest will become clearer; this is, as we see, closely dependent upon that of the theoretical works written in Zurich. Wagner says of these sketches: "It was just here that my former unconscious procedure became conscious artistic necessity," and to one of his commentators, who had spoken about his allowing science to run away with him, he replies—it was just when he was completing *Oper und Drama*—: "At this moment I have once more realized that I should never have discovered the most important elements for the construction of the drama of the future, if I had not as artist first stumbled upon them quite unconsciously in my *Siegfried*" (Letter to Uhlig of February 1851). His unconscious endeavours to find a new, more perfect form of the drama, fully answering to the requirements of the Germans, were replaced by the conscious, clear, reasoning apprehension of the form; this was the process of his passage from unconsciousness to consciousness which took place during the four

[1] See the Wagner Lexicon of Glasenapp and v. Stein—Article: *Reflexion.*

years from the end of 1847 to the end of 1851, and in it the sketches played an important part. We have now to see how it came about.

The very fact that Wagner was occupied with so many different dramatic projects at the same time shows the real character of the inner process which took place. We saw that even in his school-days, after he had finished his first great tragedy, he felt the necessity of musical expression. Wagner's dramatic thought always requires both words and tones for its expression, and within his own heart they formed a single organic whole. But in coming forth they could not but be sundered from each other, and so they became two distinct languages; nothing less than a perfect representation can unite the two elements to one indivisible language. Wagner had no examples before him to follow; what he wanted had never been tried before. On the one hand he had the spoken drama, on the other, with Beethoven, music which had become drama; midway between the two the "unspeakable nonsense" (ix. 363) of the opera, which Wagner called "a grievous insult to all German sense for music and drama" (vi. 394), which was ridiculed by E. T. A. Hoffmann as "a concert on the stage with costumes and scenery," and condemned by Herder as "degrading the poet to be the servant of the musician." Only in the hazy distance of the past, in the Greek drama, did the youthful artist discern an ideal at all resembling his own. The only master of modern times who could possibly serve him as a model was Mozart, in some fragments of his works, and he may in so far be regarded as Wagner's true forerunner; in these the opera was, as it were, lifted out of itself; not only did the drama become interesting—as it often did with Gluck—but the music was truly fused with the words,



Facsimile, from the Original MS. of *Oper und Drama* (iii. 393).[1]

Mozart's music breathed a soul into the clay as Jehovah breathed a soul into the first man; it was now no longer a mere ornament, no longer a mere means of

[1] Once more I point to the glorious musician in whom music was everything which it can be in man, so long as it remains music in the plenitude of its being, and nothing but music. Look at Mozart! Was he less a musician because he was only and entirely a musician, because he would and could be nothing but musician. See his *Don Giovanni!* When has music ever attained such rich individuality, when has it been able to characterize so certainly and truly with such exuberant fulness as here, where the musician was by the nature of his art nothing more than a woman loving unconditionally?

intensifying the expression; it imparted life into the inmost being of the drama.[1] Mozart accomplished wonders, but not consciously and intentionally; he always fell back again into absolute music and operatic formulas; the work of this "delicate genius of light and love" was therefore more likely to confuse the mind than to guide it in the right direction, and Wagner was forced to depend upon himself. It is probable that he would have found the right way much more quickly and easily, and without any reflection, if a ready-made form from which he could not depart—at least externally, unless he wished his works to be still-born—had not been forced upon him from the beginning (see vii. 125). So he experimented to see if the opera was possible, *i.e.* whether the organic fusion of word and tone, of poetry and music, was practicable in the opera. Each of the works of the first half of his life may be regarded as an attempt to answer this question. In the young artist's mind the problem was a technical one, and until he had attained mastership he no doubt supposed the reason why the result never answered to the picture within him to lie in his own imperfect command over the technical means. But with *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* he had achieved mastership; it was then no longer possible for him to continue in his artless way writing operas as best he could. Liszt had rightly declared that with *Lohengrin* the old operatic world was at an end; now, or never, the problem must be solved. In *Lohengrin*, as in *Rienzi*, almost the entire expression is laid in the music, only that the later work shows far greater mastery in the poetic construction; the thoughts are of infinite depth and force, but they have cast off everything which is not emotional, so that *Lohengrin* is the one "esoteric" work which Wagner wrote; the action has a strong element of symbolism; we feel that the poet, like the hero, refuses to be questioned; he calls up the secret of his inmost heart in the language of tones, where words fail, as a "silent picture" before our eyes. Hence it is that this immortal work can be compared to nothing else; but it was impossible for him to rest where he was; he could not have written a second *Lohengrin*. What remained for the victorious musician now was to throw open the doors to the drama of the future, to discover in poetry "the potentialities answering to the wealth of musical expression." This he did, first with the sketches, and then with the theoretic speculations which they called forth.

First his mind had to become clear on one point. His *Friedrich der Rotbart* was not intended to be a musical work—an opera—but a spoken drama. "I never had the slightest intention of treating a historical and political subject otherwise than as a spoken drama" (iv. 384). "But," he says in another place, "this very subject, in driving music entirely out of my mind, showed me wherein lay the true nature of poetic material, and I found that directly the musical expression became unnecessary I had to subordinate my poetic faculty to questions of speculative politics, and consequently to suppress the artistic part of my nature altogether." Here, when he was five-and-thirty, his experience as

[1] *Vide infra*, p. 287.

a boy of fifteen was repeated; his poetic inspiration needed musical expression. This he now clearly recognised, and the sketch was laid aside. The "grand heroic opera," *Siegfried's Tod*, was also laid aside; it was in this work, which had such a strong attraction for him, and out of which his *Nibelungenring*, though very different in form, grew in after years, that he realized the impossibility of the opera. *Wieland* too was laid aside for the same reason. Wagner retained a great fondness for the beautiful story which he had dramatized so effectively, and would have liked it to be set to music by some other hand[1]—for himself it was impossible, because too late. *Jesus von Nazareth* I have called a philosophical drama; this is justified by the fact that Wagner himself indicates its subject as "the negation of loveless humanity." How he intended to execute this piece is not very easy to say; the numerous dissertations seem to point to a spoken drama, whilst the arrangement of the scenes and several details of the sketch leave no doubt that he intended to employ music. I believe this work to be of far more importance than is generally supposed, for it enabled Wagner to realize the enhancement of poetic expression possible in the word-tone-drama. When all the sketches had been rejected, he had gained light; these works of his own genius had shown him that the *problem of the word-tone-drama was concerned with the subject-matter, not the form.* He realized that the question was, not how word and tone could be made to unite together to high exhaustive expression in the drama, but what subject needed, and therefore compelled, such exalted expression.

The fundamental law of the new drama.

The solution was found directly he brought reflection to bear upon his own previous works, and especially when he became aware of the reasons why each of these four new sketches was unsuitable for his drama; he was therefore led to his discovery of the fundamental law of the new word-tone-drama by a process of genuine artistic elimination, not of abstract construction *a priori.* With *Friedrich der Rotbart* it was clear enough that the historical element which it contained was an impossible subject for musical expression. *Siegfried's Tod* however would certainly have been hailed by any operatic composer as a splendid subject for music. But directly Wagner began to write the music, he observed that "the epic narration, addressing the intellect," occupied a very large place (U., 119). The first sketch is nothing more than a dramatized mythology, and, as such, founded upon a symbol; though far preferable to a historic subject, it still contains much which addresses the synthetic reason, and only touches the heart by the medium of reflection. In *Jesus von Nazareth* the fault lies, not in the long dwelling upon single incidents, but again in the fact that so much is only intelligible to the intellect. Far less is this the case in the last of the sketches, *Wieland der Schmied*, but here again the monumental simplicity of his later works is wanting; the action contains far more numerous incidents than *Tristan*, or than any single drama of the Nibelungen cycle. Multiplicity is in itself a category of the intellect. This process of elimination led quite of itself

[1] He offered his sketch to Liszt, Berlioz, Roeckel, and others, and pressed them to compose it.

to the fundamental law of the new drama. A subject-matter which can only be apprehended by the intellect is communicable only in the language of words; the more it becomes emotional, the more certainly does it require an expression which can only be adequately supplied by music. And so the subject-matter is determined quite naturally; what the word-tone-poet has to express is *the purely human, freed from all conventionality and historical formality* (iv. 388).

The expression "purely human" is intelligible without any explanation. In the section on Wagner's art-doctrine I have discussed it in detail, following Wagner himself and other authors.[1] The immense importance of this law lies in the fact that it does not prescribe any particular external form as the only one possible, nor any other invention of abstract æsthetics, but that it exactly and fully expresses the inner life-principle of the new drama. We now see very clearly that Wagner's dramas differ from all others, not merely in the means of expression used, but fundamentally, and above all in their *subject-matter*, by which the means of expression are conditioned. The only person who could exactly determine this subject-matter was, as Wagner rightly saw, the musician.[2] And now the deed was accomplished; the artist had explored the whole realm of the drama, the thinker had surveyed his work with the clear eye of his reason, and Wagner could say: "I now entered upon a new and decisive period of my development as artist and as man, that of conscious artistic volition, along a path which I had found for myself unconsciously and of necessity; as artist and as man I now step forth to a new world" (iv. 390).

[1] See p. 203. The subject is treated more at length in my *Drama Richard Wagner's*, Chap. ii.
[2] See p. 262.

Ruhmeshalle der Klavierzauberer von Richard Wagners neuest. Opern!
München den 13 Juli 1868.

TAUSIG. KLINDWORTH. BÜLOW.

Works of the Second Epoch

> Der vollkommen Besonnene heisst der Seher.
>
> NOVALIS.

Introductory.

IN the second half of his life Richard Wagner wrote *der Ring des Nibelungen*, in four parts, *Tristan und Isolde*, *die Meistersinger*, and *Parsifal*.

It is really difficult to see how these works are to be brought into chronological order in a biography. From the few dates which I gave in the introduction to my first chapter, it will be seen that the four works are very much mixed up together as regards the time of their composition. They were all ready in Wagner's mind before any one of them was completed. In November 1851, that is, towards the close of the transition period, Wagner writes to Uhlig: "My artistic projects grow ever richer, more joyful and more hopeful. I feel a thrill of joy when I think that I shall soon begin them." The particular order in which they were executed was more the result of chance than of inner necessity. Originally he intended to complete the *Ring* first, but in 1857 he laid it aside, not so much from fatigue, as because there was not the slightest hope of his ever seeing it performed, especially just at that time, when Dingelstedt's appointment as *Intendant* at the Weimar theatre was most unfavourable to his prospects. The only place to which Wagner could look for support was Weimar, and there even *Rienzi* was now regarded as almost

impossible to perform. Publishers and theatrical directors were indeed all looking for a new work from Wagner's pen; but they wanted it shorter and easier than the *Ring*. So he wrote frankly to Liszt: "I had, as you know, absolutely no money, and as *Rienzi* had failed (at Weimar) I saw no other way open to me but to negotiate with Härtel, and I chose for the purpose *Tristan*, then scarcely begun, because I had nothing else.[1] They offered to pay me one half the honorarium (two hundred Louis d'ors)—that is one hundred Louis d'ors—on receipt of the score of the first act, and I made all the haste I could to complete it. That is why this poor work was hurried on in such a business-like manner" (Letter of July 2nd, 1858). Elsewhere Wagner relates that a proposal from the Emperor of Brazil for him to write an opera for the Italian company in Rio de Janeiro "had influenced him very considerably in the conception of *Tristan*" (vi. 380). Stories too are told of a serious love-affair which is supposed to have inspired both the words and the music of *Tristan*, but it is not explained how it came that a man who probably loved very passionately more than once in his life, only wrote one *Tristan*. We see the utter triviality of all stories and combinations of this kind. The eyes which shone upon Wagner—if they ever existed at all—had just as much to do with his "poor work," "the wonder of all art," *Tristan und Isolde*, as the Emperor of Brazil, and rather less than the hundred Louis d'ors of Messrs Breitkopf & Härtel. The same is true of another of his works: *die Meistersinger* was commenced at the beginning of the sixties, when one might have expected anything rather than a work full of merriment; and why did he begin it then? Again because he had found a publisher! *Parsifal* was sketched in 1865, because König Ludwig asked for it; the *Nibelungen* was completed when the building of the festival house in Bayreuth was sufficiently advanced to offer a hope of its being performed. With the completion of *Parsifal* the case was similar. It is not possible to trace any relation, either of cause and effect or of any other kind, between the works of genius and the events of life, except that the external circumstances of life act like a dam to the inner current; as long as the hindrance is insuperable the current is unseen and ineffective as regards the outer world; when it gives way the forces of Nature burst forth in all their might.

To this another consideration must be added; the works of Wagner's second epoch are connected so closely together, not only in respect of time, but poetically, and in their thoughts, that they form a single whole. Wagner himself spoke of *Tristan und Isolde* as supplementing the *Nibelungen*, and *Parsifal* is the completion of both. These three dramas may be regarded as a gigantic trilogy, and the satyrical piece thereto is *die Meistersinger*, which stands in the closest relationship to them. The whole work of the last thirty years of Wagner's life is therefore one single indivisible whole. In what order its separate parts

[1] That is, nothing else sufficiently advanced, for the complete sketch to *die Meistersinger* was ready long ago; so was at least the idea of *Parsifal*.

were completed is of little consequence. The whole was conceived together, and the detailed execution of any one part or any other was determined by considerations of practical convenience.

If we merely take poetic propriety into account the order will be: *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, *Die Meistersinger*. The dates of their completion would give quite a different order: *Tristan*, *die Meistersinger*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Parsifal*. Yet another order is obtained if we take the times of their first conception; it would then be thus: *Die Meistersinger*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*. In a biography this last order is the best, inasmuch as it expresses the time of conception, and besides the first sketches of *die Meistersinger* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* both fall into the first epoch of his life; it is true that they afterwards underwent extensive modifications, still they form a bridge between the two epochs otherwise very sharply divided.

I regard chronological details of this kind as of very small importance; they may well be left to the writers of memoirs and anecdotes. In the following discourse—all too short as it is—I shall leave the varied features of Wagner's external circumstances out of account, and concentrate my attention upon the dramatic centre from which the life proceeds. This is indubitably the *punctum vitale* of Richard Wagner's individuality.

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

The greater the man, the deeper his love.
LEONARDO DA VINCI.

First conception.

The first sketch of *die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was written in the summer of 1845, immediately after the completion of *Tannhäuser*. Some of Wagner's friends had suggested that an opera in lighter style might be successful, and the idea of the lively competition of singers was obtained from the tournament of song in the Wartburg (iv. 349). But the inner impulse, without which Wagner could never create, was wanting at that time, and the manner in which the subject at first presented itself to him was very repulsive to his nature. Instead of *Die Meistersinger* he wrote *Lohengrin*. The sketch was laid aside until 1861, when he returned to it and completed the work, with many interruptions, in the course of the following seven years.

How did it come that a subject which had been rejected by the author of *Tannhäuser* was taken up with such enthusiasm by the author of *Tristan*, and wrought into a glorious masterwork amidst care, anxiety and misery of every kind? A comparison of the first sketch with the finished poem will show the reason at once.

The sketch of 1845, on which the author speaks very fully in his *Mittheilung an meine Freunde* (iv. 349-353), is identical, as far as the actual events are concerned, with the later poem. A closer examination, however, will bring to light a difference between them in one very material point. The sketch contains no indication of Sachs's love for Eva, and consequently none of any inner conflict in the heart of the cobbler-poet. Sachs is here a simple historical figure, he is conceived as "the last representative of the artistic productivity of the people." He recognizes the talent of the young knight, Walther von Stolzing, and assists him in obtaining the hand of Eva in the same way as in the later play. At the close he stands up in defence of the *Meistersingers:*

"Zerging' das heil'ge römische Reich in Dunst,
Uns bliebe doch die heil'ge deutsche Kunst."[1]

This figure of Hans Sachs is grandly drawn; the vein of deep humour, too, is not wanting, but he must be regarded rather as an ornament than as the dramatic centre of the piece. The actual subject of the drama was, as Wagner himself points out, the ridicule thrown upon all the unnaturalness of our public art. Wagner draws a very true distinction between the effect of

München.

Königl. Hof- und National-Theater.

Sonntag den 21. Juni 1868.

Mit aufgehobenem Abonnement.

Zum ersten Male:

Die

Meistersinger von Nürnberg.

Oper in drei Aufzügen von Richard Wagner.

Regie: Herr Dr. Hallwachs.

Personen:

Hans Sachs, Schuster — Herr Bet.
Veit Pogner, Goldschmied — Herr Bausewein.
Kunz Vogelgesang, Kürschner — Herr Heinrich.
Konrad Nachtigall, Spängler — Herr Sigl.
Sixtus Beckmesser, Schreiber — Herr Holzl.
Fritz Kothner, Bäcker — Herr Fischer.
Balthasar Zorn, Zinngießer — Herr Weißdorfer.
Ulrich Eißlinger, Würzkrämer — Herr Hoppe.
Augustin Moser, Schneider — Herr Poppl.
Hermann Ortel, Seifensieder — Herr Thomé.
Hans Schwarz, Strumpfwirker — Herr Strasser.
Hans Foltz, Kupferschmied — Herr Hayn.
Meistersinger
Walther von Stolzing, ein junger Ritter aus Franken — Herr Nachbaur.
David, Sachsen's Lehrbube — Herr Schlosser.
Eva, Pogner's Tochter — Fräulein Mallinger.
Magdalene, Eva's Amme — Frau Dietz.
Ein Nachtwächter — Herr Ferdinand Lang.
Bürger und Frauen aller Zünfte. Gesellen. Lehrbuben. Mädchen. Volk.

Nürnberg.
Um die Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts.

Textbücher sind zu 18 kr. an der Kasse zu haben.

Neue Decorationen:

Im ersten Aufzuge: Das Innere der Katharinenkirche in Nürnberg.
Im zweiten Aufzuge: Straße in Nürnberg.
Im dritten Aufzuge: Erste Decoration: Werkstätte des Hans Sachs.
Zweite Decoration: Freier Wiesenplan bei Nürnberg.
von den K. Hoftheatermalern Herrn Angelo Quaglio und Christian Jank.
vom K. Hoftheatermaler Herrn Heinrich Döll.

Neue Costüme
nach Angabe des k. technischen Directors Herrn Franz Seitz.

Preise der Plätze:

Eine Loge im I. und II. Rang für 7 Personen 21 fl. — kr.
Ein Logenplatz . . . . . 3 fl. — kr.
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Ein Logenplatz . . . . . 2 fl. 30 kr.
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Ein Galeriestehe-Platz . . . . . 3 fl. 30 kr.
Ein Parkettsitz . . . . . 3 fl. — kr.
Parterre . . . . . 1 fl. — kr.
Galerie . . . . . — fl. 30 kr.

Die Kasse wird um fünf Uhr geöffnet.

Anfang um 6 Uhr, Ende um halb elf Uhr.

Der freie Eintritt ist ohne alle Ausnahme aufgehoben
und wird ohne Kassenbillet Niemand eingelassen.

Auf die gefälligen Bestellungen der verehrlichen Abonnenten wird bis Sonntag den 21. Juni Vormittags 10 Uhr gewartet, dann aber über die nicht benehaltenen Logen und Plätze anderweitig verfügt.

Beurlaubt: Frau Possart.

Repertoire:

Montag den 22. Juni: (Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Minister und Seidenhändler, Lustspiel von Scribe, übersetzt von Heinrich Marr. (Graf von Nangau — Herr Marr, Oberregisseur des Thaliatheaters in Hamburg, als letzte Gastrolle.)
Dienstag den 23. „ : (Im K. Residenz-Theater) Minna von Barnhelm, Lustspiel von Lessing.
Mittwoch den 24. „ : (Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Zum ersten Male wiederholt: Die Meistersinger, Oper von Richard Wagner.
Donnerstag den 25. „ : (Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Neu einstudirt Die Einfalt vom Lande, Lustspiel von Töpfer.
Freitag den 26. „ : (Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) König Heinrich IV., zweiter Theil, Schauspiel von Shakspeare.
Sonntag den 28. „ : (Im K. Hof- und National-Theater) Die Meistersinger, Oper von Richard Wagner.

Der einzelne Zettel kostet 2 kr. Kgl. Hofbuchdruckerei von Dr. C. Wolf & Sohn.

Facsimile, Programme of the First Performance of *Die Meistersinger.*

[1] Were the holy Roman Empire to fall in pieces,
Our holy German art would yet remain.

real merriment—"Lofty mirth which heals our pains"—and irony, which touches only the form, not the reality of life. And he says: "My whole nature revolted at once against this attempt to give vent to my disposition for merriment in irony" (iv. 353). In revolting against this impulse to ridicule the mere form he also, though unconsciously, asserted his own artistic instinct, which told him that the word-tone-drama could not represent the external form, but only the processes of the inmost heart. The first Hans Sachs was great, but he was not one who could be filled with music, as the body is filled with blood, throughout his being, and so awakened to the warm fulness of life.

Second conception.

In the new poem all this was changed with one stroke. Hans Sachs is not merely the main figure in the drama because of his historic character and intellectual calibre, but because his inmost heart now forms the centre of the action; or to use a convenient phrase, the action is placed *within*. The numerous incidents and wild revelry merely serve to reflect the inner, purely human motives, "by which alone the action appears intelligible and necessary, our own inner hearts responding to them by sympathy." It is well known that the historical Hans Sachs, when past middle age, was attracted by a very young girl, whom he married, and that he lived happily with her as his wife until he died. In Wagner's poem in its last form, Hans Sachs has loved Eva "for many a year," and her hand is offered "as the crown of highest praise" at the competition. His love is amply returned. She considers it quite settled that Hans Sachs is going "to take her as wife and child into his home," and later she exclaims in an outburst of emotion:

> "Ich war doch auf der rechten Spur;
> denn, hatte ich die Wahl,
> nur dich erwählt' ich mir:
> du warest mein Gemahl,
> den Preis nur reicht' ich dir!"[1]

The drama opens on the eve of the great festival of St John (Midsummer Day), on which this master of words and tones, this true master-singer, is to enter upon the last happiness of his life, in the worthiest and most glorious way, namely through his victory as an artist; free, before all the world, in the unfading youth of genius, he is to carry off the prize over his younger rivals. The young knight appears! He had met Eva on the day before in Nürnberg, and they had fallen in love with each other. Eva declares:

> "Doch nun hat's mich gewählt
> zu nie gekannter Qual:
> und werd' ich heut' vermählt,
> so war's ohn' alle Wahl!
> Das war ein Müssen, war ein Zwang."[2]

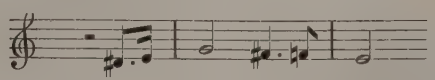
[1] I was on the right path; for were the choice with me, thee alone would I choose for my husband, the prize to thee would I give.

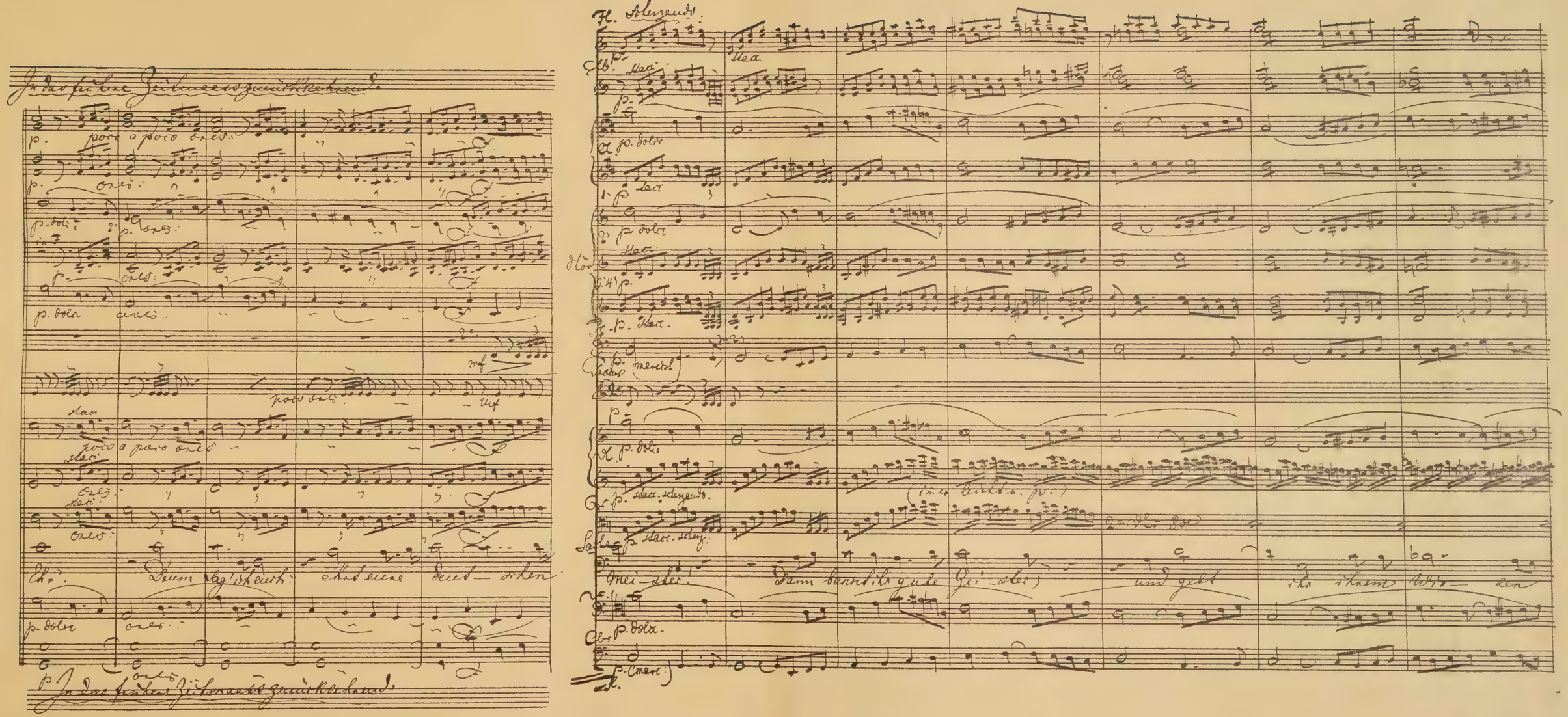
[2] Now *it* has chosen me for pangs I never knew; if to-day I am married it will be without my choice! it is an inner constraint, past my control.

Pogner, her father, has pledged his word and cannot go back; none but a master-singer shall obtain Eva, and he must gain her by singing in open competition. Sachs, when he sees the young knight, and hears his astounding request to be received into the civic guild of master-singers, at once sees how matters lie. Whilst the other Meisters, with Beckmesser (who also scents a rival) at their head, raise all sorts of objections against Walther's admission, Sachs boldly takes his part; his mind is at once made up; he will not sing!

"Vor dem Kinde lieblich hehr,
mocht' ich gern wohl singen;
doch des Herzens süss' Beschwer
galt es zu bezwingen.
's war ein schöner Abendtraum:
d'ran zu deuten wag' ich kaum."[1]

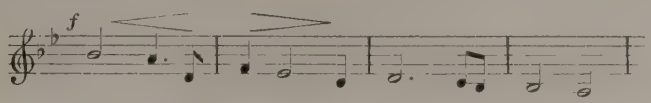
All the difficulties in the way of the young pair's happiness are overcome by Sachs's wise conduct, "in the teeth of the guild of Meisters and of the whole school." The tragic grandeur imparted to the action by the circumstance that Sachs himself loves Eva, and is forced to overcome his "heart's fond oppression," is very evident. Sachs has, as I have said, become the centre of the drama, less through his intellectual greatness than because the greatness is reflected in his heart, and gives us something, not only to think about, but to feel. And now, in the new poem, all the bitter irony of the first conception becomes the "lofty mirth which heals our pains" (x. 195). The point from which we now regard the world with its conventional forms and ridiculous prejudices is that of Sachs's soul, the soul of a great and good man, himself far too great for anything in the world to appear insignificant to him, a man who, in battling with his own "oppression," feels, by the genial goodness of his own heart, everything that oppresses the hearts of others. Forms and conventions are no longer ridiculed; only their emptiness is shown by looking deeper into the heart of pure humanity.

This conception of the drama was only possible with the aid of music; indeed, it would be truer to say that only the musician could have conceived it thus. The poet had to be a tone-poet. Sachs could never have been a hero of wordy lamentations. Only once do we hear him whisper to himself, "to the maid so sweet how gladly would I sing"; his is silent grief, and we only learn how matters really stand from Sachs's humorous remarks to Eva and her own admissions. But how eloquent, how impossible to mistake is the tone-language which reveals the inmost heart of the hero! The very first time that Hans Sachs stands up for Walther in the school, at the words: *Halt, Meister! Nicht so geeilt!*, the orchestra brings the deep plaintive motive:

[1] For the maid so sweet how gladly would I sing; but the fond oppression of my heart had to be overcome; 'twas a lovely evening dream, I scarcely dare to dwell upon it.



Facsimile of a portion of the original score of *Die Meistersinger*.

which returns later in the dialogue with Eva in the second act, at the words: *Ja Kind! Eine Freiung machte mir Not.* In this second act too we hear the wonderful soul-stirring motive



for the first time. It occurs here as a counterpoint to the lively *Schusterlied*, or cobbler's song, by which the artful Sachs at once stops the flight of the young pair, and checkmates Beckmesser. Its full dramatic development is reserved for the introduction to the third act, where its true import becomes clear. As Wagner says some time later: "it is the bitter lament of resignation in a man who nevertheless continues to show a cheerful and energetic face to the world." This introduction to the third act must be regarded as the highest point of the drama. The situation is known; we have already seen into the depth of Sachs's heart, and now, before the curtain rises upon the motley final scene, we hearken with closed eyes to the last struggle in the heart of the hero. First the lament; but soon it gives way to the thought of his own artistic creations; it is as if the eternal part of a great human breast were striving against the temporal. With deep compassion Sachs looks downwards to himself, and again upwards, smiling through tears, to his higher self; once more the lament is heard, now unfolding itself majestically in all its breadth and fulness, showing the mighty convulsion of a soul stirred to its deepest being; "calmly and silently it attains the cheerful state of mild and blessed resignation" (E., 104). Still more wonderful, still more novel and unexpected, is perhaps the significance which the music attains in the closing scene of the last act, where the various leading themes are woven into a marvellous web of polyphony, twining and winding themselves round Sachs's address: *Ehrt eure deutschen Meister!* as if all mankind were thronging to his side, and their hearts began to "melt and throb once more beside this great and good man,"[1] as if they felt ennobled and lifted out of themselves by the light of his eye and the wisdom of his speech. This passage in particular is of overpowering force on the stage, especially the moment where the people join softly in words but dimly understood. We ourselves feel how the magic force of the great man's personality sends blessings far beyond his own surroundings and his time, through the centuries to ourselves. In such passages as these both word and tone attain a power unknown before in any art.

I have now indicated where the central point of the drama lies, and this is sufficient. Were we to continue the examination, and endeavour to trace the dramatic and musical life as it spreads from this point over the whole work, there would be great danger of falling into abstract speculation.[2] We have

[1] See p. 105.

[2] Those who are interested in the subject will find much information in my treatise *Le drame*

gained a clear understanding of the new "potentiality" which the musician has discovered and developed in the drama, this time by means of a practical example, not by any theoretical process. Let us now, by the light of this knowledge, cast a glance upon the work as it was first conceived by Wagner, to see in what the transition from conscious to unconscious artistic volition, so often spoken of by Wagner as the entry of a new period in his life, really consists. In the following remarks I intend purposely to avoid referring to *die Meistersinger* as an example, for we now have it before us, and the application of our principles to this work is easy.

Wagner declares that the step from the last works of the first half of his life to those of the second is greater than that from *die Feen* to *Tannhäuser* (vii. 175). It is important to note that the advance was not technical, nor did it lie in the application of any new invention; it was simply the conscious recognition of the law that the word-tone-drama can only represent the purely human. This is, as I have already shown,[1] no artificial arbitrarily invented rule, but a law derived from the inherent nature of music. The influence exerted by this simple cognition over the creations of "the poet, wedded to tones," is shown very simply and convincingly by Wagner in his letter *Zukunftsmusik*, where he selects *Lohengrin* for comparison; it has lifted him out of slavery and torment, and bestowed on him the proud independence of a sovereign ruler. One glance suffices to show wherein the difference between the conscious and the unconscious master-work consists.

"The whole interest of *Lohengrin*," Wagner writes (vii. 163), "lies in an inner process within Elsa's heart, touching the secret springs of the soul." It is just these inner processes that are common to all mankind, and constitute the purely human. Every drama of deeper import, whatever its character may be, treats of this inner life; only in the spoken drama the interest is largely—and in the lighter works entirely—occupied with external events. Music, however, is only able to express the inner processes; they are its own special province. "Music, even in its highest intensity, is and always remains feeling" (*das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, iii. 112); "the power of music to solve every imaginable problem is unlimited, so long as it remains fully and entirely that which it really is: expression" (*Oper und Drama*, iii. 343). If the word-tone-drama (as distinguished from the opera) is to be a single connected work, without break or flaw, the whole action must be concentrated round "an inner process of the heart." But in imposing this limitation, music also makes it possible to enhance the internal interest to a degree unknown before; "the seer in tones manifests the unspeakable far beyond the limits of conceptual thought" (x. 321). This unspeakable now appears for the first time, not as a

Wagnérien, in the section on *die Meistersinger*. As a curiosity I may mention the work of the brothers Bonnier, *Le motif-organe des Maîtres chanteurs*, in which the entire score of the *Meistersinger* is referred back to a single motive!

[1] See p. 206 *et seq.*

final *result* of the drama, but as one of its essential, I might say *constructive*, elements. *Lohengrin* then complies with the highest law of the word-tone-drama just in so far as the whole interest is concentrated upon an inner process. But along with the inner process we find numerous external circumstances, and many of them are treated very fully; this was the inevitable result of the manner in which the poet had conceived his task from the first. As an example let us take the highest point of the dramatic climax at the close of the second act, when the inner conflict in Elsa's breast can only be indicated by means of a very complicated apparatus; every person of the drama is present on the stage, with all the choruses; one positively feels the distress of the "seer in tones," who in his desire to express the unspeakable—the only thing he cares about at the moment—has to drag all this weight of material.[1] The fully-conscious word-tone-poet on the contrary manipulates his material, whatever it may be, in such a manner that *by far the greater portion of the poem may be available for expressing the inner motives of the action;* that is the whole secret of the word-tone-drama. And Wagner shows quite clearly how much has been gained by this, for, after mentioning *Lohengrin*, he gives an example from the second epoch of his life: "The whole of the very striking action only takes place because it is required by the inmost soul; it comes forth to the light as it has been formed from within."

"Action" in the new drama.

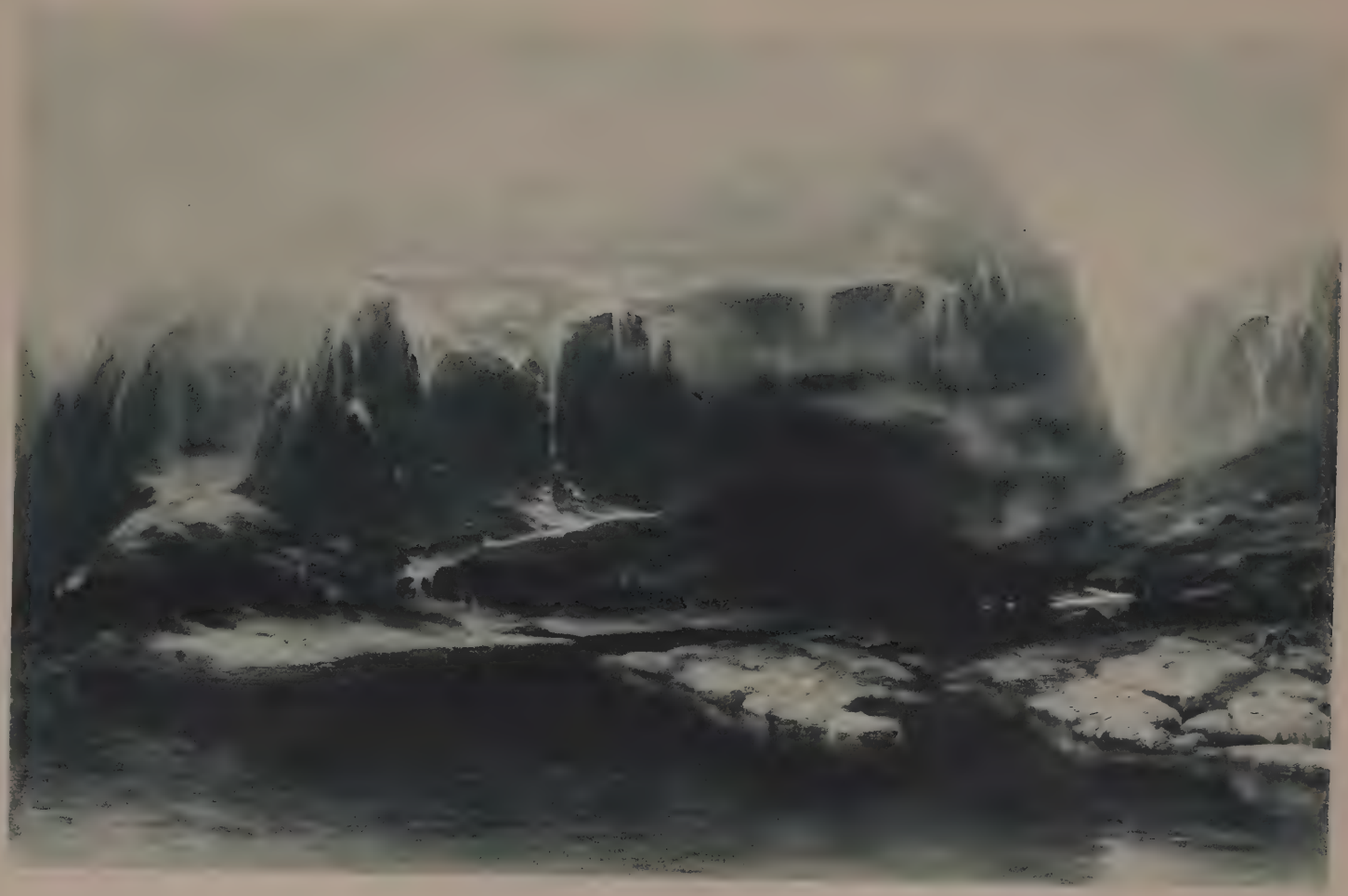
Herewith the distinguishing feature of the drama created by Wagner in the second half of his life is clearly defined. In it the action comes forth to the light as it has been formed from within. And this mode of constructing from within determines not only the general physiognomy of the work, but everything, down to the smallest detail. Each of the four great works of this period has its own style of orchestration, from the simplicity of *die Meistersinger* to the lavish splendour of *die Nibelungen;* its own peculiar polyphonic texture, from the finished and intricate counterpoint of *die Meistersinger* to the compact harmonic progressions of *Parsifal;* its own manner of employing modulation, from the chromatic changes of *Tristan* to the almost Mozartian colouring of *Siegfried*, etc., etc.; just the same characteristic contrasts are observable in the poems, in the verse metre, in the use of assonance, alliteration and rime, from the weighty alliterative verses of the *Ring* to the flowing diction of *die Meistersinger*, with the astounding art of its rimes; in their psychic character, from the ecstatic mysticism of *Tristan* to the directness of the *Nibelungen;* in their thoughts, from the symbolic conciseness of *Parsifal*, embracing a whole doctrine of the world within itself, to the simple depth of *die Meistersinger*. These are all the consequences of the mode of construction from within, and they may be traced still further; it is possible to say from hearing a single bar of Wagner's music which work it is taken from, just as we distinguish men by their voices; nay more, in some works, *Siegfried* and *Parsifal* for example, the poetic character of each act is so pronounced, and every detail is so saturated with it, that the simplest musical phrase, often one

[1] See especially the splendid full chorus *In wildem Brüten muss ich sie gewahren.*

chord, will suffice to determine to which act it belongs and must belong. This is something more than mere sense of artistic propriety; it shows, to use Wagner's words, how "the outer form grows from the inmost centre of the world." In the ordinary drama all the various threads are collected together one after another and at last brought to a centre, but here the entire work emerges from the centre. This mode of procedure is only possible with the aid of music, for music alone enables the dramatist *first* to awaken the purely-human feeling which lies beneath the work, and then to clothe it in words, *first* to invoke the general idea, and afterwards to show the particular picture. In the determining power of music too lies the principle of unity in the new drama, a unity such as was never known before. Construction from within means the construction of the whole drama out of music. We have already seen most convincingly, when speaking of Hans Sachs, that music is the inner element, poetry—*i.e.* the word and the picture—the outer shell. That is what Wagner means when he says in the preface to his collected writings: "music will give us the *laws* for a truthful art." When we find that a work of Wagner's contains a rich and varied scale of poetic expression[1] we may be assured that music has given the laws for this expression. The full score is not added till afterwards; it does not come to spread its fragrant web of tones over the whole work until the poem is finished, but the special musical inspiration must have been before the poet from the first, as the reflection, or rather the phenomenal embodiment of his drama, of the process in the inner depths of his soul.[2] The same is true of the gesture and of the entire stage picture in all its varied lightings. Wagner's expression for his works, quoted above (see p. 210), "deeds of music become visible," is now intelligible. A discriminating and sympathetic consideration of a single work from his second epoch has sufficed to show us this. If we wish to find a more logical and rational appellation for the German drama which Wagner created, we may call it "the purely-human drama"; its artistic character will be realized by describing it as "a deed of music become visible." On the one side is the inner man with his organ of expression, music ("*Die alles klagende, alles sagende, alles tönende Seele*"), on the other the outer man with the whole visible world; between the two the thought, manifesting itself as art through the imagination. The distinctive character of the new drama is that the whole work is constructed and receives its law from the *inner* man. The important thing to note is that the thought is not determined by the outer impressions, and then communicated to the inner man to produce a dramatic action; but that from the very beginning the thought serves the inner man, and is led, determined, and governed by him. As Wagner

[1] I shall return to this interesting subject when I come to speak of *Tristan und Isolde*.

[2] Since the publication of the German edition of this work the author has been able to study the very first sketches of *Lohengrin*; they furnish documentary proof that all the principal motives of the drama formed themselves in Wagner's mind simultaneously, while the poem was still an unfinished sketch.



continues in the passage just quoted: "The entire significance of the external world here depends upon the inner processes of the soul."

The direct application to *die Meistersinger* of the principles we have just elucidated can scarcely be necessary, since it is from the deeper understanding of this work that our fundamental conception has been deduced. There is only one remark to make. I have confined my attention to Sachs, because he is in fact the life-giving centre of the drama. Grouped round him however are several other figures, each presenting a sharply defined individuality. Herder's remark relative to art in general applies here: "Every pure idea which conveys a perfect picture imparts clearness to the ideas around it." In *die Meistersinger* Hans Sachs is a perfect picture; round him are grouped in varying perspective the other figures of the motley scene; to everyone, even the furthest, he imparts clearness.

Der Ring des Nibelungen

Voluntas superior intellectu.
JOH. DUNS SCOTUS.

The sketch of 1848.

I closed the section on *die Meistersinger* with a quotation from Herder, and will begin this one on the *Nibelungen* with another. When speaking of the perplexing mass of Germanic myths and sagas he asks: "Will there ever grow an Iliad or an Odyssey out of these various sagas and stories of adventure belonging to so many different peoples and conditions, a work which should, so to speak, wear the crown as a *saga of sagas?*"[1] These words were written just a hundred years ago, in 1795, and many attempts to realize Herder's wish have been made in the meanwhile. The *Nibelungenlied* epic of the thirteenth century, and, in a less degree, the Northern myth, gradually becoming known through German translations of the Eddas and Sagas from the Icelandic and Norwegian, form the two main columns on which many a poetic edifice of this century has been raised.[2] With the exception of Hebbel's Trilogy and Jordan's Epic, both of which were written *after* the publication of Wagner's *Nibelungenring*, these attempts are now all forgotten; even Geibel's play, *Brunhild* (1857), which owes much to Wagner's influence, is known to very few; its character as a drama, although it is unsuitable for the stage, stamps it as a bastard product, predestined to failure. It is a remarkable instance of Wagner's unerring theatrical insight that he, and he alone, at once recognized that the mediæval *Nibelungenlied*, treating of Siegfried's death in its first portion, and of Chriemhilde's revenge in its second, was suited only for epic, not for dramatic treatment.

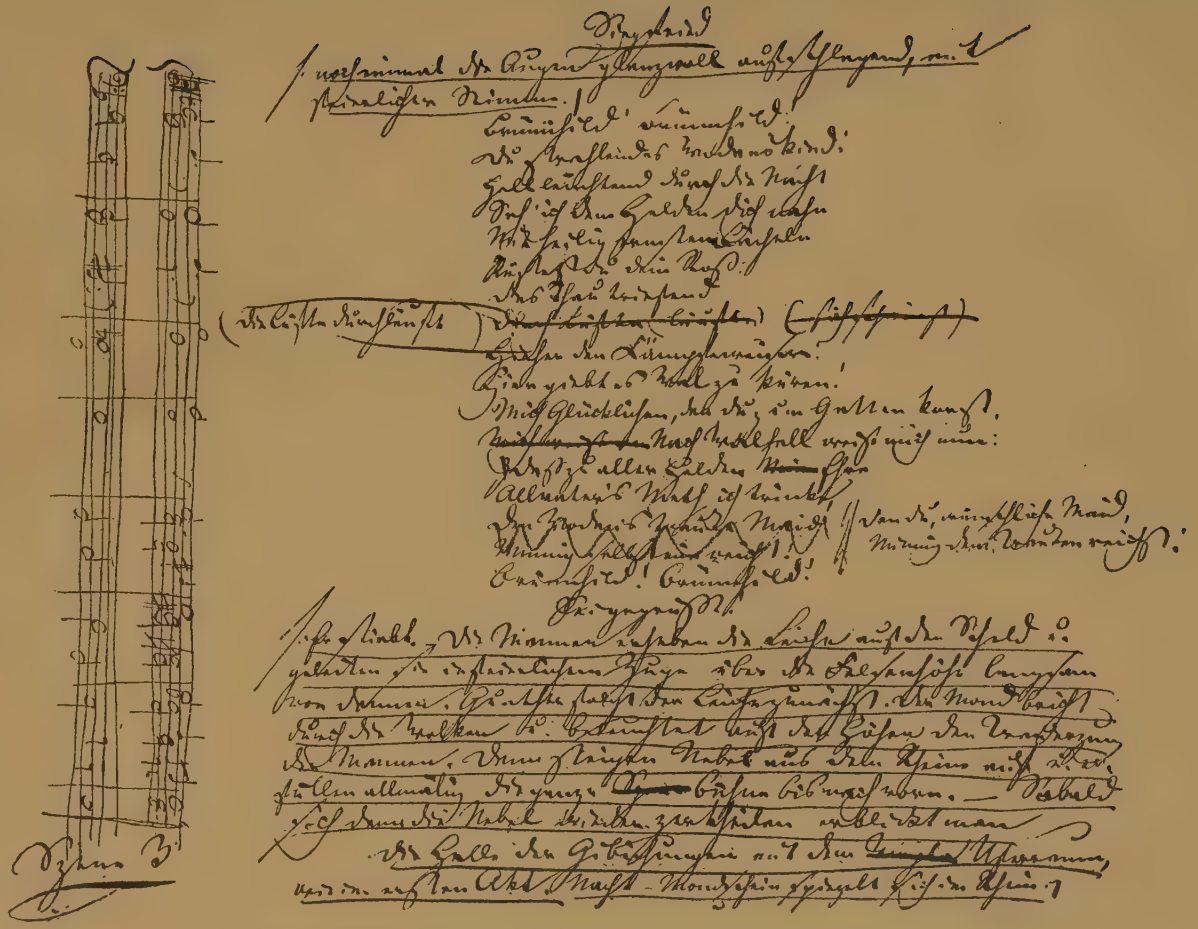
[1] *Ideen zur Geschichte und Kritik der Poesie und bildenden Künste*, Abth. 34.

[2] The most complete and scholarly treatise on the immense mass of *Nibelungen* literature will be found in H. v. Wolzogen's *Der Nibelungenmythos in Sage und Litteratur* (Weber, Berlin, 1876).

The tangled mass of diplomatic intrigues and counter-intrigues, the accumulation of knightly deeds suitable for the entertainment of mediæval courts, the jumble of semi-historical events and half-understood myths, could never produce a clear, vigorous drama, still less a purely human drama, such as music requires. And so in 1848, when after several years' study of the material he had assimilated and obtained full command over it, he made his first sketch for the drama of the *Nibelungen* myth (see p. 271). In one respect it differs from all other similar essays, namely that Siegfried's death is here the end, the culminating point of the whole action, not the beginning or the middle. Only at its close therefore does Wagner's drama come into contact with the first book of the *Nibelungenlied*. From the very first Siegfried is the hero, Brünnhilde the heroine; Gunther and Chriemhilde-Gutrune are subordinate persons, and engage our interest only in so far as they are concerned in the tragic fate of the heroic pair. In a word, Wagner turned from the *saga* to the *myth*. This fact, that he rejected the mediæval, semi-historical Lied, and took the Gods and heroes of northern mythology instead, marks an epoch in his life; for herewith he adopted a path as artist, the importance of which did not become clear to his reason until afterwards. At a later time he acknowledged that the inimitable quality of the myth is that it is always true; "what it contains condensed within itself remains for all time" (iv. 81).

The best way of realizing the value of that first sketch is to compare it with the best of the other attempts to treat the same subject dramatically with music. The best is indubitably that of the well-known æsthetician F. Th. Vischer, in Vol. II. of his works. This at least is the earnest endeavour of a man who was master of his subject, which is more than can be said of other essays of the same kind, such as Dorn's opera, *die Nibelungen*, a work of no importance whatever.

Vischer's sketch is a wonderful mixture of correct judgment and artistic incapacity. The general remarks are strikingly shrewd and true. "Unless I am much deceived there yet remains a world, a new world of tones to be opened out to us. . . . Music is yet to find its Schiller and its Shakespeare. . . . We need our own indigenous national world of feelings and of tones, in music, etc." Excellent too is his indication of the *Nibelungen-saga* as offering a suitable material for this new world of tones. "We have not yet found the music such a subject requires; nor have we found such a subject in our music, just as in our poetry we have never yet had a Shakespeare." Passing on to say what new requirements he expects this new music to fulfil, he continues: "the knights of the old heroic *saga*, and their gigantic destinies, need a different treatment from German huntsmen . . . their greatness is of a piece with their paucity of words"; this, he says, is not incompatible with music, but on the contrary "music requires simple motives, simple action." . . . But the moment Vischer has to realize these ideal forms of his, what a contrast! Then it is no longer the *Nibelungen-saga*, but the *Nibelungenlied*, which is "as if made for the opera"! A special virtue of this *Nibelung-*



Facsimile of a passage in the original M. S. of the first sketch of *Siegfrieds Tod.*

enlied is that it affords plenty of opportunity for festive pageants"! And now he dramatizes the entire *Lied*, step by step, obtaining a monstrous "heroic opera" in five acts, with seventeen men singers, though it is not possible to guess who is the real hero of this hydra of the stage. Siegfried dies in the middle of the second act ("in splendid hunting costume"), Gunther, Hagen, Gernot, Dankwart, Rüdiger, Dieterich, Hildebrand are all equally in the foreground; Chriemhilde alone stands forth among the crowd; her revenge is indeed the real subject of the drama. The whole of the last act is one continued butchery, up to a "closing catastrophe: fearful and bloody crash of doom in a terrific storm of all the musical forces." It would be difficult to imagine anything more impossible for music. Now mark how this man of preëminent ability, the first who in many cases saw where the real truth lay, yet managed to steer straight past it, so that his sketch is more interesting from its omissions than from what it contains. "According to the *Edda*, the tragic course of events is the result of a *curse* laid by the dwarf Andvari on the Nibelungen hoard; in the *Nibelungenlied* this feature has disappeared, in the *Klage* it appears again, but dimly indicated. *It is useless for the opera*"! Vischer also complains of the unclearness of many of the motives, especially with respect to Brünnhilde, but here as elsewhere he solves the difficulty in a way peculiar to himself: "Brünnhilde must not be a Walkyrie"! The drink of forgetfulness is indispensable, it is true, "but it must be rejected"! Siegfried's oath declaring his innocence would be "out of keeping with the rapid course of the dramatic action"! The circumstance that Siegfried can only be wounded in his back (wherein lies both the terror of the oath of vengeance and the cause of his treacherous murder) "must also fall away"! "The giants and dwarfs must *of course* be omitted." And so it goes on; every single characteristic feature is cut out, one after the other, till there remains—an opera with numerous festive pageants and plenty of butchery. It is impossible to imagine what part is to be played by the new world of tones, of which Vischer himself says that it needs simple motives and simple treatment. Truly Wagner was right when he declared that only a musician could extend the drama so as to answer to the possibilities of musical expression (see p. 262).

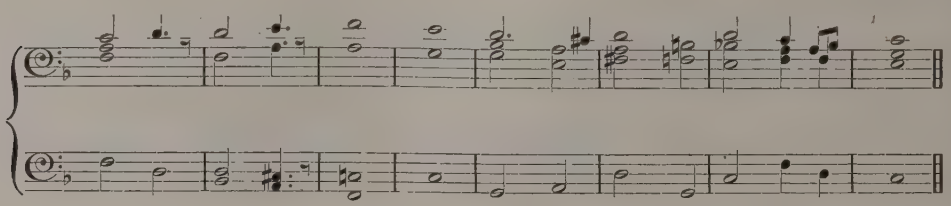
And now let us turn to Wagner's sketch of 1848. Those who do not possess his works will gain some idea of the way in which the problem is approached and solved from the external course of events, which is almost exactly the same as in the finished poem. It begins with the seizure of the gold by Alberich, who forges from it the fateful ring with its magic power. Wotan takes it from him by force, whereupon Alberich lays a curse upon the ring: "it shall be the destruction of all who possess it." The entire drama turns upon the possession of this ring, the symbol of worldly power. Siegfried is born of the tragic love of Wotan's children, Siegmund and Sieglinde; he kills the dragon and so becomes master of the ring, without knowing its value. He awakens the beautiful Walkyrie Brünnhilde, who has protected his father Siegmund out of pity, disobeying Wotan's commands, and makes her his wife.

H. Hendrich. The Rhine-daughters.

Then he goes forth in search of further adventures, and reaches the court of the Gibichungen on the Rhine, where he meets Hagen, the son of Alberich and half-brother of Gunther. Hagen has long been waiting for him and the ring. Siegfried drinks the drink of forgetfulness[1] and woos his own wife, Brünnhilde, for Gunther; Brünnhilde vows revenge, and tells Hagen of the spot where Siegfried can be wounded; Hagen kills him when out hunting.[2] Brünnhilde's "divine knowledge" returns to her; she ascends Siegfried's funeral pyre and returns the ring, purified by the fire, to the Rhine-daughters. The general struggle for might and dominion over the world forms therefore the grandiose background of the drama; to enable it to embrace the whole world, the struggle is made to appear under various symbols; the industrious dwarfs seize the gold from the innocent water-maidens; the gods, with their preëminently intellectual character, obtain possession of it by cunning; the clumsy

[1] The drink of forgetfulness, in the very same connection, is an ancient feature of the Indo-Germanic myth. The return of memory likewise, as for instance in *Sakuntalâ*, at the sight of a ring.

[2] The title page of the grand heroic opera will be found in facsimile on p. 271, and a still more interesting extract from the same MS. is given here; it is the first draft of Siegfried's last words, with the stage directions for the funeral procession; in the margin is a suggestion for the funeral music. This MS. bears at its beginning the date November 12, 1848, and at its end that of November 28, 1848; as it contains no other musical sketch but this one, there can be no doubt of its being the very first musical idea for the great Nibelungen work. Under a sudden inspiration Wagner seems to have turned his paper round, quickly drawn two staves, and noted down these eight bars. Perhaps the use of the tenor clef denotes trombones. To enable the reader to decipher the music I give a transcription of it:



H. Hendrich, Siegfried's Tod

giants employ physical force; the proud princes of the earth stretch forth their greedy hands towards it. But from the moment when it was torn from the water, where it had lain in purity as a "shining bauble," and made to serve the lust for might, a curse has rested upon it, to which all are subject. Such is the background against which stand forth the mighty figures of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. She is the daughter of Wotan and of the wise mother-earth,[1] and she resigns, first her god-head in pity, then her wisdom in love; she is the goddess become human; the might and the wisdom of her former state are lost, but she preserves the world-embracing heart, and the capacity for superhuman suffering. The most complete contrast to Brünnhilde is Siegfried, the prototype of the "witless hero"; he is, if I may so express it, the man become god, the hero whose soul is "free from envy, glad with love," to whom neither fear nor covetousness are known. "In him," says Wagner, "I saw man in the natural, joyful fulness of his sensible existence; no historical dress yet obscured his form, nor were his movements obstructed by any force external to himself; his acts spring from his own joyful existence; the error and confusion arising from the wild play of passion rage around him and involve him in destruction, without once his inner impulse being stayed; nor even in the presence of death does he allow any control over his actions save the restless stream of life flowing within himself. Elsa had shown me this man; it was the spirit of spontaneous impulse, the one eternally productive principle embodied in human shape, the doer of real deeds, the *man* in the highest and most direct plenitude of his powers, and above all things lovable. His acts did not spring from any desire for love gained through reflection; they lived and swelled every vein, every muscle of his body to rapturous fulfilment of their functions" (iv. 399).

These few remarks merely indicate some of the more striking features of the poem, but enough to prove the immense gulf which separates this sketch from all others of the same kind, and to show it as a work in which only the greatest of poets could have succeeded. The more we study the world of Northern poetry and German mythology and *saga*, the more reverence and admiration shall we feel for this poem of Wagner's. In it he has achieved that which he himself describes as "the highest conceivable effort of the poet; to take the myth, the product of the clearest perceptions of the human race, adapt it to the circumstances of our present lives, and place it intelligibly before us in the drama." With the clear and certain insight of a consciously creating poet or seer, Wagner has recognized the eternal truthfulness of the relations between man and his surroundings, as perceived intuitively by whole nations, the natural symbolism or philosophy of life, as distinguished from that of thought, and has wrought this material into a work of art perfect in form. And therewith he has fulfilled Herder's wish; he has produced, out of the mass of confused *saga* and story of adventure, a poem worthy to be hailed by Germans as "saga of sagas." Nor must it be forgotten that both *Tristan* and

[1] "The human mother is the embodiment of the earth."—Bhâgavata Purâna.

Parsifal belong organically to the *Ring*. The absolute parallel between Tristan and Isolde on the one hand and Siegfried and Brünnhilde on the other, was observed long ago by sober scholars, and Wagner expressly calls his *Tristan* "a supplementary act to the great world-embracing Nibelungen-myth" (vi. 379). The parallel between the two "witless heroes," Siegfried and Parsifal, is at least equally striking. Parsifal is not indeed a "supplementary act," but the Christian myth is the necessary sequel of the *Ring*, is foreshadowed therein and absolutely required by the death of Brünnhilde.[1] That this was felt intuitively by Wagner, as an artistic necessity, is evidenced by the fact that in the same year, 1848, almost in the same breath with his first sketch for the *Nibelungen*, he drew up that for *Jesus von Nazareth*.

The "phase" fallacy.

It is with great reluctance that I interrupt my account to discuss a point of controversy, but as biographer I must raise my voice against the notion that these three works, so closely and inseparably connected together—*der Ring*, *Tristan*, and *Parsifal*—represent different stages of development in the heart of the artist. Misled by a few casual dates, people who possess only a superficial knowledge of Wagner's personality have succeeded in building up a plausible theory, according to which Wagner changed his views every few years, somewhat in the way of a Wallachian having himself sewn into a new skin every few years.[2] By this theory Wagner was, at least mainly, a Christian until the autumn of 1847 (*Lohengrin*), but after that he adopted a "heathenish naturalism," exhibiting itself in *der 'Ring des Nibelungen*. A few years later he fell under the influence of philosophic pessimism, and, having cast off the little that was left of his heathenism, wrote *Tristan und Isolde*. But this uncomfortable state of the negation of the will to live did not long retain its attraction for him. "*Die Meistersinger* (1861-1867) shows how the pessimist phase gradually gave way to more healthy ideas" (Hébert, p. 67).

[1] The latest results of modern research are of great interest in this connection, as tending to show that "the entire grandiose background of northern mythology, the world-tragedy, the history of creation and final destruction of the world by fire, do not belong to ancient Teutonic myth, but are of later origin, and show the influence of Christianity." It is claimed as proved that the Teutonic races knew nothing of Wotan, of Walhalla, or of Walkyries; these, though of course founded upon popular beliefs of the time, are, as poetic creations, the work of individual poets belonging to the upper classes in the Viking period, men who had come into contact with Christianity, perhaps even with Monks, in the British Isles. The destruction of the world by fire, for example, the *Götterdämmerung*, is not an ancient Teutonic but an ancient Christian idea (see the discussion of Professor Sophus Bugge's works by Professor Wolfgang Golther, *Bayreuther Blätter*, p. 205, and other articles by the same author in the *Litteraturblatt für Germanische und Romanische Philologie*). These results were, however, far from unexpected. Twenty years ago Mannhardt wrote of the *Edda*, "it is the conscious work of the professed poets of the upper circles; the store of genuine old popular myths which it contains is very limited" (*Antike Wald-und Feldkulte*, Berlin, 1877, p. xii).

[2] See especially Abbé Hébert's *Trois moments de la Pensée de Richard Wagner* (Fischbacher, 1894). Hébert is professor of philosophy in the famous Collège Fénélon. His writings possess sterling value and contain many excellent remarks, which is more than can be said of other works in which this thesis is maintained.

At last Heaven had compassion upon him; Saul was changed to Paul, and in this his latest transformation, in the "phase of religious belief," he wrote *Parsifal*. If such views as these were confined to professors of philosophy they would do little harm, for these gentlemen know how to place their thoughts in so many varying lights that no theory need be considered too extravagant.[1] But on other people they produce a most distorted picture of Wagner's life and work—a caricature. Neither chronologically nor biographically nor psychologically, nor above all artistically, does the theory possess an atom of truth. Chronologically it is certainly wrong, for no amount of manipulation of dates will get rid of the fact that these works of his second epoch were conceived simultaneously; biographically it is equally untenable, as the reader of this book need scarcely be told; psychologically it is as absurd to speak of a man changing his views as of his changing the colour of his hair; he may dye his hair, and he may purposely misstate his own views, so as to deceive other people about them, but even this would scarcely succeed for very long, for a man's views are born within him, and they have shone from his own eyes before he himself sees them reflected back from the world. Finally the theory is *artistically* wrong, because it is just herein that the distinction lies between creative genius and talent. Genius goes to work like the people making myths; it lays much more into the creation than it dreams of itself. "The artist stands before his work, if it really is a work of art, as before a puzzle," says Wagner. Shakespeare wrote his Henry VI. with the innocent intention of setting the history of a king of very moderate capacity for the stage, and he wrote a sublime trilogy. Johann Sebastian Bach sat down to write a book of exercises for budding pianists, and he composed *das Wohltemperierte Klavier;* Wagner received an order for an opera for Brazil, and he wrote *Tristan und Isolde!* But even the concepts which a genius harbours in his reason at the moment of creation are not concerned in the creation itself; even when he believes himself to be guided by them, he is not. That is what people who talk about phases never understand. Wagner himself draws a perfectly just and very shrewd distinction between a *view* of the world (*Weltanschauung*) and a *concept* of the world (*Weltbegriff*). He said of the *Nibelungering*, whilst he was sketching the poem: "my entire view of the world found its completest artistic expression therein" (U., 192). Nevertheless he admits that in this particular work his artistic creations completely overthrow his philosophic doctrines. "From the very beginning, in sketching the plan, I unconsciously followed quite another and much deeper view; instead of regarding one phase of the development of the world, I regarded the very being of the world in every conceivable phase, and recognized its vanity. Naturally, as I was guided by my view, not by my concepts; what came to light was quite a different thing to what I had *thought*"

[1] See for instance Hébert's second, very readable book, *Le sentiment religieux dans l'œuvre de Richard Wagner* (Fischbacher, 1895), where the phase theory has already assumed a much milder form.

(R., 67). The influence of abstract thought upon artistic creation is as a rule enormously exaggerated. When Wagner first sketched his *Nibelungenring* (*together with his Jesus von Nazareth*) he knew neither Feuerbach nor Schopenhauer; the later form of the Ring, supposed to have been written under the influence of Feuerbach, shows much less "heathen naturalism" than the first; "Christian-pessimism" would be much nearer the truth! And *Parsifal*, written in the "phase of religious belief," has simply cast off all the dogmatic and historic Christianity of *Jesus von Nazareth*. It is perfectly true that Wagner's philosophical thought was at one time under the influence of Feuerbach, at another under that of Schopenhauer, but Feuerbach's influence was not deep, and Schopenhauer rather cleared his thoughts than modified them. But even if the perplexing term "phase" is to be applied to this, the last stage of his progress to clearness and finality of thought when he was forty, it is not reflected in his art. The world-view (*Weltanschauung*) to be traced in *Parsifal* is the same as that in the *Nibelungen;* it is the outcome of that inner artistic individuality upon which not even Schopenhauer was able to exert a modifying influence. When he first began to sketch his *Ring* the idea forced itself upon him that the holy Grail was but an idealized version of the *Nibelungen* hoard[1]; in his "view," the Grail drama and the *Nibelungen* drama could not be sundered. The figure of the "simple"[2] Parsifal did not appear to him until a few years later, namely when he broke off his work on *die Walküre* to sketch *Tristan und Isolde*. The vessel of grace consecrated with the blood of our Saviour appeared to his imagination as a Christian parallel to the heathen conception of the gold, and in the first sketch of *Tristan*, Parsifal, "the pure fool," "knowing by sympathy," appears to the hero, dying in love, in the third Act. This was rejected, probably on artistic grounds. Parsifal became himself the leading figure in a new work, which was first sketched in the spring of 1857, in the middle of the composition of *Siegfried*, shortly before the poem of *Tristan* was commenced! This shows how the three works were connected together in Wagner's mind by secret threads which no other person can follow; we now know too what Wagner meant when he said that *Parsifal* could not be understood until *Tristan* had been digested.[3] These facts are decisive, and it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon trifles. During the "phase of dark pessimism," a picture of the Madonna hung over his writing-table (see L., ii. 142); during the "phase of religious faith" one of Schopenhauer. But let us return to the *Nibelungen*.

The trilogy of 1852.

So far I have only spoken of the first sketch, that of 1848; it is a "poetic deed" worthy of careful attention. It will be remembered that after he had

[1] See *Die Wibelungen*, 1848, the section "Idealization of the hoard in the holy Grail."

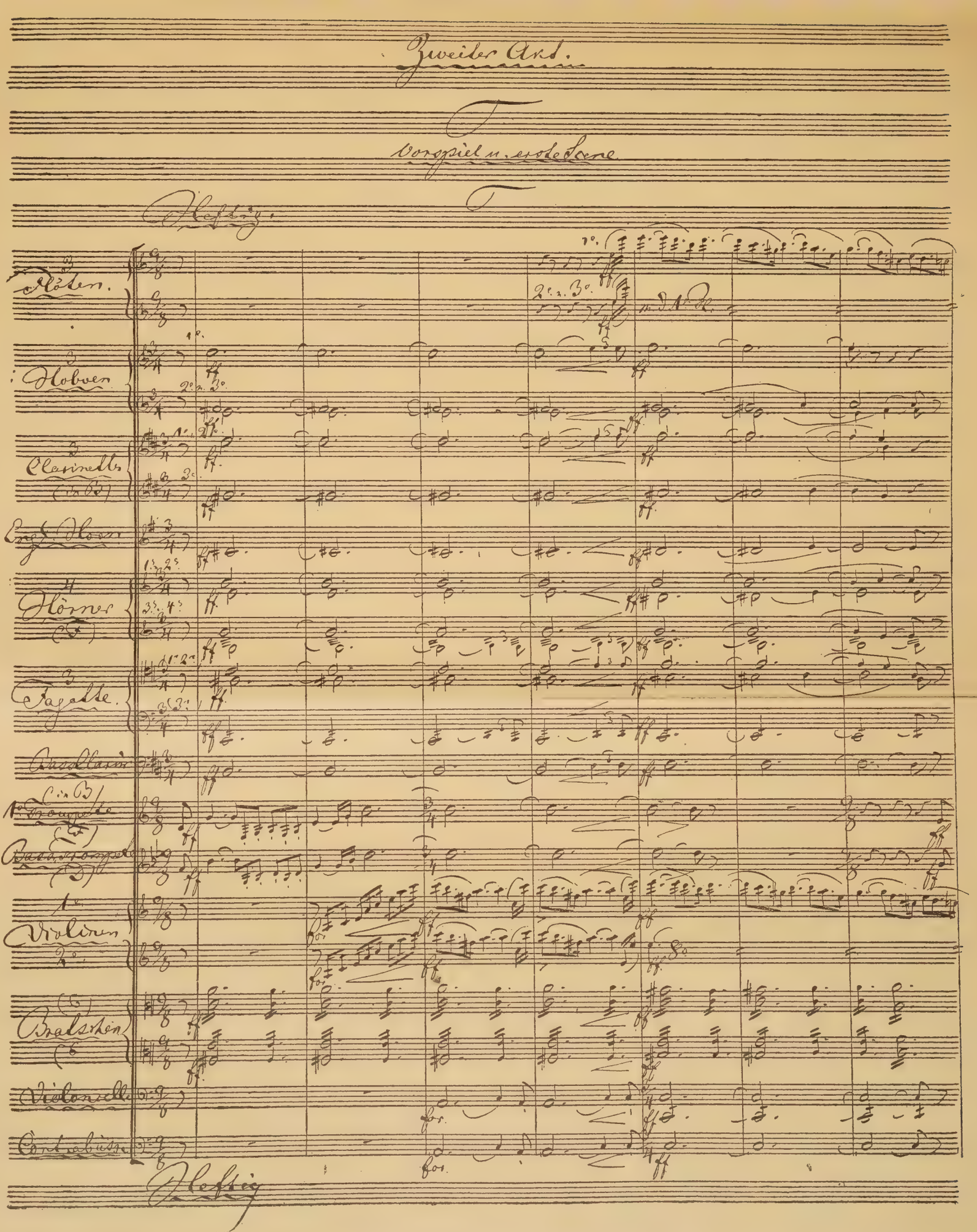
[2] On the exact meaning of the old high German word "*tumb*," see Vilmar, *Literaturgeschichte*, 20te *Aufl.*, p. 122. Perhaps the English word "simple" comes nearest to the meaning. (G. A. H.)

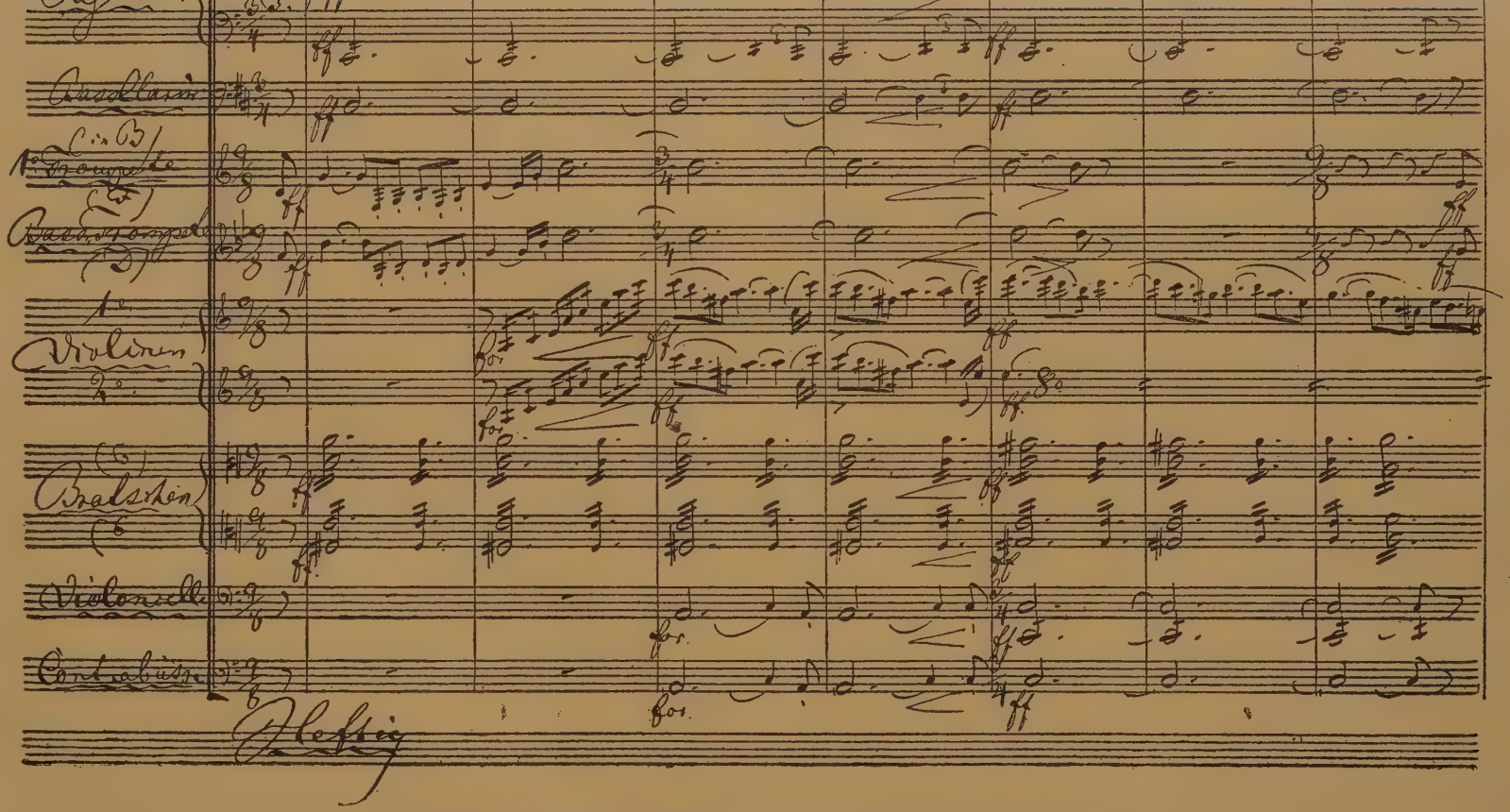
[3] Wagner writes to Liszt (ii. 137): "First you must digest my *Tristan*, especially the third Act with the black and the white flags; then *die Sieger* will be clear." *Die Sieger* (The Victors) was the title of a sketch which was never carried out; its ideas were transferred to *Parsifal*, the drama of "the victor."

sketched out the whole myth in its grand outlines, producing his "saga of sagas," he intended to arrange one principal catastrophe for the stage, merely indicating its connection with the rest, because with our modern theatres it seemed impossible for him to do more. The principal catastrophe was *Siegfried's Tod.* But the poem suffered from one fault, just the opposite of that of the other Nibelungen poems, and due to the fact that much of the action had to take place before the drama opened. In the others the relations between Brünnhilde and Siegfried, especially with respect to Gunther and Gutrune (Chriemhilde) is never clear, whereas with Wagner the love of Siegfried and Brünnhilde, and their death by treachery, are the subject of the entire drama. But the "grand connection which imparts to the figures their fearful and decisive import" (U., 119), the struggle of all for dominion, is much less distinct, and is only indicated by narrations. The task of acquainting us with the events previous to the opening of the drama is entrusted to the Norns, the Walkyries, and Alberich (in his scene with Hagen). This "communication to the thought" Wagner recognized as a decided fault; he felt the necessity for communicating the entire course of events directly to the senses, on the stage. And so he determined to write a second drama, *der junge Siegfried* (the youthful Siegfried). But there still remained a great deal to be told; after *der junge Siegfried*, *die Walküre* became a poetic necessity, and the last stone was laid to the noble edifice in the Prelude, *das Rheingold.* The common notion that Wagner conceived his work backwards is quite a mistake, for the entire course of events, from Alberich's seizure of the gold to the death of Siegfried and Brünnhilde, was sketched out before he began. The cause of the strange order in which the poem of the trilogy was composed lies in the fact that at first he had only the ordinary operatic stage in his mind, and had to observe the limits which it imposed, but afterwards, when the grandeur of his own work came home to him, he gave up all hope of realizing it on an ordinary stage, and composed the poem as it had been originally conceived in his mind, heedless of all other considerations.

The action in the Nibelungen.

Since 1848 one very important event had taken place in Wagner's artistic development; he had consciously discovered the fundamental law of the word-tone-drama! And just as in the *Meistersinger*, so now in the *Nibelungen*, he retained the old sketch; but laid the action *within*, and so was able to employ the all-powerful instrument of musical expression. In his first sketch he surpassed all who went before and came after him; in his second he surpassed himself in almost an equal degree.

In the small space which remains for me to speak of the *Nibelungen*, it would be impossible to make the process by which this was accomplished by Wagner quite clear, if the reader had not got the example of *die Meistersinger* and Hans Sachs before his mind. There the dramatic action lies mainly and externally in a conflict between Walther and Beckmesser, and artistic unity is imparted to it by making the tragic struggle within the heart of Hans Sachs the "inmost centre" (to use Wagner's expression) of the whole action. In the *Ring*

Facsimile of a portion of the original score of *Die Walküre* (Act II, Prelude).



Facsimile of a portion of the original score of *Die Walküre* (Act II, Prelude).

he did something very similar. Wotan, who in the first sketch is nothing more than one important figure in the drama, becomes in the poem of 1852 the centre of the whole mighty work. Some explanation is here necessary, that it may not be regarded too superficially.

In the perfect word-tone-drama the action must be developed just as the inmost soul requires; it must be constructed from within (see p. 287). It was not sufficient to place Wotan in the midst of the battle, and arrange that all the threads should pass through his hands, as was done in the first sketch. Together with the strife for possession and dominion going on amongst the various persons of the play, there must be an inner conflict, fought out in the heart. And it must be observed that although the desire for possession is a universal human motive, that of the value of gold is purely conventional; the musician had to look deeper and find a real purely human motive, in no way depending upon convention, to be the centre of his drama. This he did with one stroke: "only he who abjures love can obtain dominion over the world by gold." "Here," Wagner writes to Uhlig, "you have the motive from which the drama is constructed throughout," and, just as in the *Meistersinger*, it is introduced without the external course of events having to undergo any very serious modification. The action proper is, however, completely altered. The curse pronounced by Alberich—his "blessing"—is now a mere external feature, and exists for the sake of the visible *gesture*, now raised, by the advent of music, to such high significance in the drama (see p. 315). But the ring is already under a curse, because it has been achieved by a crime against the holiest emotion which the human breast contains—against love.

Wie durch Fluch er mir geriet,
Verflucht sei dieser Ring![1]

All who aim at power share the guilt of Alberich in a greater or less degree. "Alberich with his ring could not injure the gods if they were not already prepared for destruction" (R., 35).

"Ich berührte Albrich's Ring—
gierig hielt ich das Gold!
Der Fluch den ich floh
nicht flieht er nun mich:—
was ich liebe, muss ich verlassen,
morden, was je ich minne,
trügend verraten
wer mir vertraut!"[2] (Wotan).

And whoever touches the accursed symbol, even though he do not strive after power, is subject to its fearful doom. Man is not alone in the world; in the deep philosophy of the Aryans the principle of individuality is conceived as the

[1] As by a curse I achieved it,
Accursed be this ring.

[2] I touched Alberich's ring; greedy I took the gold. The curse which I fled now flees not me. What I desire I must leave, murder that which I love, deceive and betray whoever trusts me.

deceit of Mâyâ, and every great tragedy repeats the same idea, in the direct, convincing way of art, for it reveals individuality to us in its highest phase, as the one really great, "highest happiness of the children of earth" (as Goethe says). But at the same time it shows us the great individuality proceeding unbidden, unconscious from the general ocean of mankind, never once able to cast off its thousand points of contact with the world around, or to rise to true freedom, and compelled at last to sink back into the nameless, formless depths, as into the waves of the sea. Gods, giants, dwarfs, Gibichungen have all coveted the gold; Brünnhilde, Sigmund, and Sieglinde have been created by Wotan as the direct offspring of his plans for dominion, and not only have all these fallen under its curse, but so has also Siegfried the hero, "free from envy," "stranger to the god; lacking his favour." "And so does a deep thought, only vaguely apparent here and there in the scraps of legends which remain, that of gold accursed in the hand of love, attain a higher significance."[1] In this gigantic work we have in a certain sense a tragedy of will and a tragedy of fate in one. Wotan is the hero of the tragedy of will, Siegfried of the tragedy of fate. Brünnhilde, whose life is inseparably interwoven with both, is the heroine of the double tragedy. Her will involves her in the loss of her godhead and in the "sleep of death"; awakened to new life and humanity, she is led by her fate to compass the death of him whom alone she loves. And now, having gained knowledge, that is, her clear divine vision having returned to her through the death of Siegfried, both the tragedies, will and fate, are united within her; the whole action passes in review before her mind, from Wotan's dream of "endless glory" to the murder of "the glorious hero, the guardian of the world." In returning the ring, purified by fire, to the water floods, she releases the world from the curse of the gold; involuntarily following

H. Hendrich. *The Ride of the Valkyries.*

[1] Wolzogen, *der Nibelungenmythos*, p. 136.

Siegfried to his death, she expiates the last guilt, her own, forced upon her by fate. So she accomplishes Wotan's will and works "a world-redeeming deed."

Evidently the analogy between Wotan and Hans Sachs—as regards the construction of the drama—must not be pressed too far. Constructively the difference between the two works is enormous. The point in which they resemble each other is that all the rich and varied action turns round one figure, in whose heart a conflict takes place, forming the inmost centre of the whole. With Sachs the conflict is entirely within himself; it finds no expression in words; his attitude to the outside world is passive, whilst Wotan is the centre both of the inner and of the outer action. His mighty passions come visibly forth. The suggestion of a friend that he should entitle his work *Wotan* was, as we may easily believe, seriously considered by Wagner. The Walkyries, amongst whom Brünnhilde appears as the most perfect embodiment of Wotan's will; the *Wälsungen*, whose brightest offspring is Siegfried, are *his* children: *his* is the bold idea of opposing the strong sword to the base gold, so as to gain dominion of the world without renouncing love; he falls because he has touched the ring, and "greedily taken the gold." We see how this art penetrates to the inmost soul; the curse lies, not in some fateful words spoken by Alberich about the ring, but in the fact that the noble Wotan himself has coveted the gold—though it was but for a passing hour—and the curse rests henceforth upon everything which proceeds from him:

> "Was ich liebe, muss ich verlassen,
> morden, was je ich minne!"

Wotan's destruction is not worked by external influence: intellectually and morally he is above all living beings, "eternally are all things subject to the spear's strong lord." In the struggle by which his soul is riven, in the conflict between his desire for power and his longing for love, in the depths of his own soul, lies the cause of his inevitable destruction. His character as a *supra-human* human being enables the poet to load his fall with a wealth of tragedy, reminding one, as Herder had foreseen, of the Iliad. One generation after another comes and passes, new hopes arise in his heart with each, becoming ever more noble and more selfless. His dreams of dominion are resigned in grim despair at the death of Sigmund; but before Siegfried he retires *voluntarily* and full of gladness.

> "Was in des Zwiespalts wildem Schmerze
> Verzweifelnd einst ich beschloss
> froh und freudig
> führ ich frei es nun aus:
> weiht' ich in wütendem Ekel
> des Niblungen Neid schon die Welt,
> dem herrlichsten Wälsung
> Weis' ich mein Erbe nun an!"[1]

[1] That which in the wild grief of my despair I once ordained, I now carry out freely with gladness and cheerfulness. In rage and disgust I gave the world over to the hatred of the Nibelungs: now I assign my inheritance to the glorious Wälsung.

But the greater Wotan becomes, the purer his heart, the more sublime his thoughts, the more tragic is his fate, the more inexorable the curse which weighs upon him.

"Denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden."[1]

Siegfried himself hews Wotan's spear, "the stay of the world," the pledge of his power, in two, and the awakened Brünnhilde omits "to do the world-redeeming deed," to take the ring from Siegfried's finger and return it to the Rhine maidens; she does not think of her father or of his distress; fervent love fills her being:

"Himmlisches Wissen
stürmt mir dahin,
Jauchzen der Liebe
jagt es davon!"[2]

And now, robbed of his last might, his last hope,

"auf hehrem Sitze
stumm und ernst,"[3]

the god looks down upon the events of the world as they hurry past, and sees how the highest and most sacred offspring of his "thought"—Siegfried and Brünnhilde—are hurled to destruction and a cruel death after sufferings untold.

What the God sees from the heights of his Walhalla is the "principal catastrophe," which Wagner entitled *Siegfried's death* in his first sketch, but which, now that it has come to be the closing catastrophe of the tragedy in Wotan's heart, he calls *Götterdämmerung* (eve of the gods). Wotan now no longer appears upon the stage, but the Norns tell us about him, and Waltraute appears as his messenger; above all, the music, connected as it is, through the preceding dramas, inseparably with Wotan (from whom all the main themes are derived), now attains a power, an incisive definiteness, comparable to nothing else in the world, and causing us to feel as if we ourselves witnessed the events through Wotan's eye; from the beginning of *Götterdämmerung*,

"O heilige Götter,
hehre Geschlechter!
weidet eu'r Aug'
an dem weihvollen Paar!"[4]

to the moment when Brünnhilde, standing beside the body of Siegfried, raises her eyes to heaven:

"O ihr, der Eide
heilige Hüter!
lenkt eu'ren Blick
auf mein blühendes Leid:
erschaut eu're ewige Schuld!

---

1 For all guilt is avenged on earth.

2 Heavenly knowledge storms within me,
Rapture of love drives it away.

3 On holy seat—silent and solemn.

4 Oh sacred race of the holy gods—let your eyes rejoice at the hallowed pair.

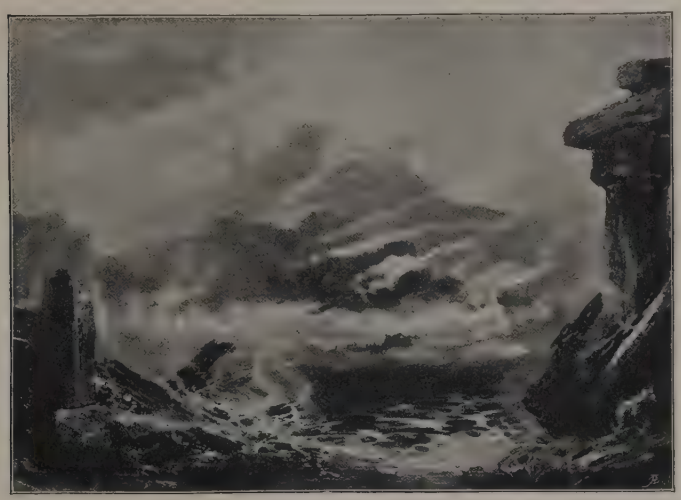
Meine Klage hör',
du hehr'ster Gott!
Durch seine tapferste That,
dir so tauglich erwünscht,
weihtest du den,
der sie gewirkt,
des Verderbens dunkler Gewalt."[1]

The drama began with Wotan's dream of

"Mannes Ehre,
ewige Macht"[2] (words whispered asleep).

It ends with the longed for message:

"Ruhe! Ruhe! du Gott."[3]



Last Scene of *Götterdämmerung*. Design by Professor M. Brückner.

For a more detailed account of the course of the action, and for observations on the music and its relation to the action, I must refer my readers to my work *Le Drame Wagnérien*. Here I must content myself with having endeavoured to bring home to him how Wagner has in the *Ring des Nibelungen* extended the possibilities of dramatic action in a way no one ever dreamed of before. This power has been gained by calling in "the wealth of musical expression"; who but a musician could have found it possible to compose a great tragedy in which the hero pervades the scene from first to last without once appearing

[1] O ye holy protectors of oaths; turn your eyes upon the fulfilment of my sorrow; see your eternal guilt! Hear my complaint, thou awful God! Through his own brave deed, so longed for by thee, hast thou doomed him who did it to the dark realm of destruction.

[2] Manhood's honour, eternal might.

[3] Rest! Rest! thou god.

upon the stage, as he does in *Götterdämmerung?* In the presence of such a deed we must acknowledge the man who thus raised the power of music to be one of the mightiest poets that ever wrote.

Tristan und Isolde

Love is the final purpose of the history of the world—the Amen of the Universe.

Novalis.

The law of simplification.

Whatever differences there may be between the *Meistersinger* and *der Ring des Nibelungen*, they possess one characteristic in common, namely, that a large number of persons are engaged. But music calls for simplicity; variety destroys its power of expression and development; however complex the polyphony, at each successive moment it is one, and cannot be analysed. The circles drawn round any given centre may be enlarged; the composer may, as Wagner says: "expand the point into which the emotional subject-matter has been compressed to its highest power (*Oper und Drama*, iv. 174), and one point may, as we saw in the *Ring*, lead to another, bringing quite new and sharply defined individuality, as it were one circle within another; but there must always be one unity, one single "condensed point," recognizable as the centre of all. This is the indispensable condition of music assuming form (*v. s. p.* 207). The more varied the picture on the stage, the more definitely will this unity have to be expressed. In the two works we have been considering, the central point lies in the inner heart, in the one case in the heart of Hans Sachs, in the other in that of Wotan, whence the music diffuses itself over the whole work, just as the sun diffuses light over the whole world. In *Parsifal*, where the persons are also very numerous, the "inmost centre" lies, as we shall see, not in any one individual, but in the Holy Grail, the symbol of divine Grace. In *Tristan und Isolde* the simplification required for the music is attained in quite a different way; no doubt the poet was forced by his subject-matter to adopt this new method of treatment. In *Tristan* it is not possible to distinguish the central point from those around it; from the very first all the dramatic moments are collected into one action, which extends its sphere, at last to be "whelmed in the waves of the world's breath."[1] This simple action is developed of inner necessity, without external circumstances being able to affect it in any way. The number of persons is consequently reduced to a minimum, and, what is still more important, the action itself, which Wagner found in a very complicated form, is reduced to its simplest features. In front are only two—Tristan and Isolde—quite in the background, Kurwenal and Brangäne, who appear as little

[1] Isolde's last words.

more than symbols of manly and womanly fidelity; higher than these, but still further back, King Marke; scarcely distinguishable from the green of the forest or the distant horizon of the sea, the shepherd, the young seaman and Melot; that is all. One central figure perhaps there is: "Frau Minne."[1] Not a word is spoken in the course of the whole drama which has not direct reference to *love*. Isolde and Tristan are presented to us at three decisive moments of their love tragedy; directly the outer world intrudes upon them the action is broken off. The same is true of the others: the young seaman at the beginning of the first act sings of his "Irish maid, his wild, his lovely maid"; the shepherd asks but one loving question: "What is it with our master?" Love makes Melot into a traitor; Kurwenal and Brangäne are embodiments of the noblest form of love, faithfulness, and their fate follows that of the love-tragedy; in the great heart of Marke love for his dearest of all friends, Tristan, whom he values as his own son, struggles with that for "the wondrous sweet-exalted woman," Isolde, whom he owes to his friend. And now mark the simplicity of the action, of the tragic love of Tristan and Isolde? At the very beginning Isolde tells the whole story in four words,

"Mir erkoren,
mir verloren!"[2]

It is the old old tragedy of hopeless love, here reduced to its simplest and most general, purely human essence, as neither Shakespeare in his *Romeo and Juliet*, nor Gottfried v. Strassburg in his romance in rimes, would have ventured to treat it, and at the same time imbued with a fulness of expression only to be attained by music. This marvellous intensification of the expression has only become possible through the grand, classical simplification of the action, whereby the dramatist in the first place attains the necessary external condition, namely space; but above all he attains "in the dramatic poem itself a poetic counterpart to the symphonic form" (vii. 169). I will now endeavour to show by means of a short sketch how strictly the work is built upon this purely human —and therefore musical—kernel, "*Mir erkoren, mir verloren.*"

In the first act Tristan is bringing Isolde (destined for him by Frau Minne) to King Marke to be his bride; she should have been Tristan's, but before the evening arrives she will belong to another. Isolde resolves to die, and challenges Tristan to drink the cup of poison—*the draught of death*—together with her. Death opens their lips; how should the heroes lie in the presence of death? They sink into each other's arms:

"Du mir verloren?
Du mich verstossen?"[3]

[1] *Frou Minne*, the personification of love, is a very familiar figure in the epics of the Middle Ages. She is the German Venus, but in a stage where the allegory in flesh and blood (Venus, or Frau Holda) has become little more than an abstract idea (See Grimm, *deutsche Myth.*, 4th edition, i. 48; ii. 744).

[2] Destined for me; lost to me.

[3] "Thou lost to me? thou reject me?"

But Brangäne had done a deed:

" Thör'ger Treue
trugvolles Werk."[1]

She had changed the drink. The coast of Cornwall is reached, the royal bridegroom approaches to welcome his bride; the lovers have not died:

" wie sie da hofften
ganz zu genesen,
da ward der sehrendste
Zauber erlesen."[2]

Scarcely had they been united in death when they were again irrevocably lost to each other. The second act opens with this forcible separation of the lovers. The torch before Isolde's chamber is the sign for Tristan not to approach; vainly does Brangäne, with a presentiment of treachery, implore her to leave the torch " but for to-day." Isolde seizes it:

" Die Leuchte—
wär's meines Lebens Licht,—
lachend
sie zu löschen zag' ich nicht!"[3]

Tristan rushes in; once more they clasp each other:

" War sie nicht dein,
die dich erkor,
was log der böse
Tag dir vor?"[4]

Now are they able to tell their " deep secret," not only for one short moment, as on board the ship; a long " night of love " has come to them:

" Verloschen nun
die letzte Leuchte;
was wir dachten,
was uns däuchte."[5]

In the renewed delusion of never waking again they whisper to each other:

" So starben wir,
um ungetrennt,
ewig einig,
ohne End',
ohn' Erwachen,
ohne Bangen
namenlos
in Lieb' umfangen,
ganz uns selbst gegeben
der Liebe nur zu leben."[6]

---

[1] " Deceitful work of foolish faith."

[2] " As they hoped entirely to recover, a consuming spell was cast upon them."

[3] " The torch—were it the light of my life, laughing would I quench it without fear."

[4] " Was she not thine who chose thee, what did the evil day lie to thee?"

[5] " Extinguished now the last light; what we thought, what seemed to us."

[6] " So we now died, and unparted, ever one, without end, without waking, without fear, enshrined in nameless love, given over to ourselves shall live alone for love."

But again they were deceived; "the day had not yielded to death"—not yet did "the night endure for ever." Their fervent prayer:

"Nun banne das Bangen
holder Tod,
sehnend verlangter
Liebes-Tod!"[1]

had not been heard. A second time "happiness fraught with deceit" had smiled upon them; once more they were betrayed to the "spectres of the day." Tristan, "the truest of the true,"[2] falls to the earth, wounded by the hand of the traitor Melot; what *Frau Minne* had united is again sundered by the world. But "to Frau Minne life and death are subject." Those whom she has united must be joined, even though they be doomed to death. The sick Tristan has already heard "the door of death crash behind him," but from "death's blissful terror" he is once more awakened to the light of day:

"sie zu suchen,
sie zu sehen,
sie zu finden,
in der einzig
zu vergehen,
zu entschwinden
Tristan ist vergönnt."[3]

Across the sea Isolde hurries to him; "true with Tristan to die"; but now again she loses him at the moment when she thought to possess him fully; again she is cheated:

"um dieses einz'ge
ewig-kurze
letzte Welten-Glück."[4]

In the delirium of his joy at Isolde's approach Tristan tears open his wound; as Isolde enters he sinks dead into her arms. Their fate is fulfilled; no longer is she "tossed from night to day that the sun may feast its eyes on their suffering." Those around see only Tristan's dead body; but Isolde sees his eyes mildly open, she sees him "ever mightier, star-illumined, raise himself on high"; from his lips there breathes a melody:

"Wonne klagend
Alles sagend
mild versöhnend,"[5]

and she sinks dead to the earth.

The "sources" of Wagner's *Tristan*.

To this simple form is the story of Tristan and Isolde reduced, a story which we only possessed before in bulky old French and German romances, like

[1] "Now banish our fear kindly death, thou death in love we ardently long for."

[2] So he is rightly called by King Marke, as Brünnhilde says of Siegfried, "the purest was he who betrayed me."

[3] Her to seek, her to see, her to find, to be lost, dissolved in her alone, this to Tristan is given.

[4] Of this one all-too-short last happiness on earth.

[5] A joyful plaint, telling all and mildly atoning.

the poem of Gottfried v. Strassburg with its twenty thousand verses. The previous history, up to the drinking of the love-draught, occupies with Gottfried eleven thousand verses; with Wagner sixty! The severe simplicity of the action in Wagner's drama is in marked contrast with the elaborate intrigues and adventures which make up the greater part of every other version. I often wonder what is meant when Gottfried v. Strassburg's poem is said to be the source of Wagner's Tristan. The most one can say is that he obtained his *frame* from Gottfried. As I explained in my treatise, *Le Drame Wagnérien*, Wagner was fond of choosing legends and legendary figures, because he found them well suited for his process of simplification. But it is preposterous to talk of either Gottfried v. Strassburg or Wolfram v. Eschenbach as *sources*, as if Wagner had done nothing more than adapt their poems for the stage. In Gottfried, for instance, one of the most important features—the foundation in fact of the whole action—is absent, namely that Tristan and Isolde love each other from the very first, and are destined for each other by God; with him their love is nothing more than the effect of the love potion, which they drink quite accidentally, and it has a very unpleasant pathological flavour in consequence. Of course the really fundamental motive of Wagner's drama, the one out of which it has all grown, the *draught of death*, can find no place here. Many a fine trait, absent in Gottfried, may be found in the French version, *e.g.* that just mentioned, of the love of the hero and heroine from the moment of their first meeting. Isolde's mother has prepared the love-potion, because she has observed the growing love between them; she intends it for Isolde and King Marke, and wishes therewith to ward off the evil consequences of Isolde's passion for Tristan. Wagner's knowledge in this department of literature was deeper than that of many a professed scholar, and it is possible and probable that he adopted more than one suggestion from the French.[1] But the draught of death, which is for Wagner's *Tristan* what the curse of love is for his *Nibelungen*, is entirely absent in the French version; its introduction is something more than a new feature; it imparts an entirely new significance to the story. The death draught is the lever whereby Wagner lays the entire action within, in the deepest depths of Tristan and Isolde's hearts, so that, as he himself says, "life and death, the whole signification and existence of the outer world, are determined by the inner psychic processes" (vii. 164). As in *die Meistersinger* and *der Ring des Nibelungen*, so too here, "the action comes forth as it has been produced from within" (*v.s.*, pp. 287 and 299). One more observation will bring the fundamental difference between Wagner's poem and all the other versions of the Tristan legend very prominently into view, and at the same time assist us to realize the poetic excellence of Wagner's work.

What a wretched part does the unfortunate Marke play in all the earlier versions! He is the butt of everybody, like the policeman in the pantomime! And what are we to say to the "hero", Tristan, anchoring his ship off an

[1] See my *Notes sur Tristan et Isolde* in the *Revue Wagnérienne*, 1888, p. 232 *et seq.*

island to spend weeks in sensual enjoyment with Isolde, and then, without a blush, handing her over to his uncle to be his bride? Or to Isolde, who sends Brangäne to take her place in the bridal-chamber, and on the next morning has her faithful servant murdered in the forest that she may tell no tales. And then the endless intrigues, in which the highest finesse of cunning is made to serve the insatiable appetites of the lovers! That Gottfried has succeeded in constructing a poem of entrancing beauty out of these materials need not be denied, but if we leave the charm of the descriptions, and the surpassing beauty of the language out of consideration, we shall have to admit that his Tristan and his Isolde are just as contemptible as his King Marke and his dwarf Melot. And *this* is called the "source" of the loftiest, noblest, purest pæan to love ever sung by man![1] No indeed, its source lies elsewhere! In December 1854 Wagner wrote to Liszt: "As I have never known the true happiness of love in my life, I intend to raise a monument to this loveliest of all dreams; from beginning to end it shall be saturated with love. I have planned a Tristan and Isolde in my head, it is the simplest, and at the same time the most thorough-going musical conception; the black flag which waves at its close shall then be drawn over myself as I lie down —to die." Longing for love and longing for death in his own breast; *that* is the source of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. "The ancients represented Eros as the genius of death, with a reversed torch in his hand," said Wagner once to a friend, after playing some of *Tristan* to him.[2] The desire for death plays a great part in Wagner's works; the *Holländer* has but one prayer:

Ew'ge Vernichtung, nimm mich auf!"[3]

Tannhäuser exclaims as he frees himself from the embrace of the goddess of love:

"Mein Sehnen drängt zum Kampfe;
nicht such' ich Wonn' und Lust.
O, Göttin, woll' es fassen,
mich drängt es hin zum Tod"![4]

So too Wotan:

"Eines nur will ich noch,
das Ende, das Ende"![5]

This is very prominent in many portions of *die Nibelungen*, and so in *Parsifal* is the prayer of Amfortas:

"Tod!—Sterben!
Einzige Gnade!"[6]

[1] Catulle Mendès, the French poet and critic, writes of Wagner's *Tristan*: "C'est le plus miraculeux drame d'amour qui ait été écrit par un être humain" (*Revue de Paris*, vol i., p. 197).

[2] Wille: *Fifteen Letters of Richard Wagner, with reminiscences.*

[3] Eternal dissolution, receive me!

[4] My longing is for battle, I seek not joy or pleasure; oh goddess know, my longing is for death!

[5] But one thing I wish for—the end, the end!

[6] Death!—to die! only mercy!

and Kundry's

Schlaf!—Schlaf!
tiefer Schlaf!—Tod.[1]

On the other hand the real drama of the longing for love is *Lohengrin;* here already Wagner conceives his subject as it could only have been conceived by a musician, for the characteristic feature is that no external hindrances stand in the way, and that the happiness of the lovers depends upon an inner psychic condition; it is the happiness

"Das sich uns nur durch Glauben giebt!"[2]

In *Tristan und Isolde* the longing for love and that for death, so often depicted by Wagner, are fused into one: "Longing, longing, unquenchable; desire always renewed—languishing and thirsting; only release: death, destruction, never-waking-again!" This is Wagner's own description of his *Tristan* drama (E., 102); and of its close he says: "It is the rapture of death, of the cessation of existence, of the last release in that wondrous kingdom from which we are furthest removed when we wish to enter it by stormy violence. Shall we call it death? or is it the wonder-world of night, from which, as the legend says, the ivy and the vine have grown up in eternal embrace on *Tristan und Isolde's* grave?"[3] The ivy and the vine are symbols, not of Isolde and Tristan alone, but also of the twofold longing for love and death. How clearly is it brought before us by Wagner!

The apotheosis of love.

Tristan had formerly been in Ireland, he had seen Isolde, but had not dared to raise his eyes to the king's daughter:

"Was mir das Auge
so entzückte,
mein Herze tief
zur Erde drückte:
im lichten Tages Schein,
wie war Isolde mein?"[4]

---

[1] Sleep! sleep! deepest sleep!—Death!

[2] Which we only attain through faith.

[3] This beautiful legend is still told in Afghanistan. Durkhânî has been forced to wed a stranger chief instead of the one she loves, Adam Khân. Her only comfort is in the solitude of her garden, where she has planted two lovely flowers side by side; one represents Adam, the other Durkhânî. But one day she sees that Adam's flower has suddenly faded, and at that moment her husband appears before her, a sword stained with blood in his hand, and tells her that it is the blood of her lover; she falls dead beside the withered flower. Adam is not dead, but only wounded; on hearing of her death he says but one word: "*Durkânî!*" and dies. They are laid in the earth far apart from each other; but *love was stronger than death;* they are no longer to be found where they were buried; beneath the spot where the two flowers, Adam and Durkhânî, once blossomed, there they lie together; the plants have grown to large and beautiful trees; they have wound their roots round the bodies of the lovers, and their branches intermingle, casting a shade upon the grave (*cf.* Darmesteter: *Chants populaires des Afghans*, p. 117).

[4] What so delighted my eye pressed my heart to the earth. In the bright light of the day how should Isolde be mine?

But afterwards, when his uncle King Marke had determined to wed, he praised Isolde as "the most beauteous King's bride on earth":

"Was mir so rühmlich
schien und hehr,
das rühmt' ich hell
vor allem Heer,"[1]

knowing nothing of "the picture locked up within his heart," never dreaming of that which "without his knowledge had dawned within him," he returned to Ireland to fetch the bride for the King. But now "the day's specious show" is chased away by love; Tristan loves Isolde, and knows that he loves her; it

H. Hendrich. "The Plaintive Strain."

thus becomes his duty to avoid her presence, and he neglects the homage due to her as his mistress. Isolde feels that she is deceived and betrayed; Tristan, her own beloved, is wooing her for another; *never* will she belong to another. She resolves to die, and to take Tristan along with her "into the night," partly out of revenge, because she hates, or thinks she hates him:

"dort, wo ihn Liebe
heiss umfasste,
im tiefsten Herzen
hell ich hasste!"[2]

[1] What seemed so glorious and noble to me, I praised it loud before all the host.

[2] Where glowing love encircled him, there in my deepest heart I hated him.

But in truth she feels, she *knows* that he loves her, and she wishes in death to be united with him. When Tristan realizes that the cup of reconciliation which Isolde offers him is a cup of poison, he seizes it joyfully.

"In deiner Hand
den süssen Tod,
als ich ihn erkannt,
den sie mir bot;
als mir die Ahnung
hehr und gewiss
zeigte, was mir
die Sühne verhiess:
da erdämmerte mild
erhab'ner Macht
im Busen mir die Nacht;
mein Tag war da vollbracht" [1]

These heroes of Wagner's, Isolde and Tristan, never doubt for an instant that, as they love each other, *they must die*. The thought of dishonour finds not the smallest place in their hearts; their love-longing takes, and can take, no other form with them than that of longing for death. Now-a-days honour is often regarded as something conventional; Wagner's Tristan thinks differently; for him honour is the inner, immutable law of God, and as he receives the draught of death from the hand of Isolde, he proudly exclaims:

"Tristan's Ehre
höchste Treu'!" [2]

King Marke is of the same fibre. The cunning traitor Melot has indeed "filled his frank heart with suspicion," but Marke himself feels ashamed:

"dass ich nun heimlich
in dunkler Nacht
den Freund lauschend beschleiche." [3]

Neither of them does he accuse of treachery against his honour, neither Tristan, "the truest of all the true," nor Isolde,

"der mein Wille
nie zu nahen wagte,
der mein Wunsch
ehrfurcht-scheu entsagte." [4]

Deeply moved in his noble heart, he asks what is the "unfathomable, fearful, secret cause" of their common suffering. Later, when he thinks he has found the cause, he hurries to Kareol "to keep his highest faith to his friend," to wed Tristan to the wife chosen for him by Heaven.

[1] When I knew the sweet death which thy hand offered me; when I felt for certain what was the reconciliation promised, then the solemn power of the night dawned within me; my day was then accomplished.

[2] Tristan's honour; highest faith!

[3] That I should steal secretly upon my friend in the dead of night!

[4] Whom my will never dared to approach, whom my wish resigned in awe and reverence.

Wagner then has not merely taken a story which he found ready to hand, and adapted and simplified it as a drama with music, he has written an entirely new poem, far surpassing those of his predecessors, both as regards the poetic idea and as regards the conception and development of the individual characters. He has painted love in the most glowing colours, without ever once approaching its sensual side. We know from the third act of *Siegfried* (the terror of all hypocrites!) how he could represent the wild *ecstasies* of sensual passion when he chose: every phase of love finds its expression in his works, from the chaste delicacy of the bridal scene in *Lohengrin*, to the passionate embrace of Siegmund and Sieglinde. Here in *Tristan* we have as it were the apotheosis of love in death. I have said that the draught of death is Wagner's poetic invention; the *Liebestod*, or death in love, in its true sense, also only occurs, and could only occur, with him. In the other poems the lovers follow their lusts for years; Tristan is banished, enters the service of a foreign King, and dies of a wound received in battle on his behalf; his only virtue is his fidelity to his beloved. But with Wagner's heroes love cannot, as we have seen, take any other form than that of longing for death. Had they been dishonourable, or if they could have satisfied their consciences by a secret marriage, like Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (whose death is caused simply by a misunderstanding!), death would have been the most terrible of all terrors to them—the end of their love; but for *this* Isolde and *this* Tristan death is the only thing which the world of the senses has to offer them. Not even heroes can live in open revolt against the laws of the senses, to which we are all subject; still less can they sin against the law within themselves; Isolde cannot give herself to a stranger whom she does not love; "Tristan, the hero," cannot break his faith to his friend; their love is of another order, and so they must die. Only the true hero suffers the *Liebestod*.

Thought as artistic material.

I must pause here to say one word on Schopenhauer's philosophy, which Wagner is supposed—"in defiance of all laws of art"—to have embodied in his *Tristan* drama. Wagner says indeed: "thought is the highest faculty of artistic man"; all his works are full of thoughts, and it would be an interesting task to show by his dramas how, when music has been called in to assist, the thought no longer appeals to the intellect alone, as in the spoken drama, but as it were enters the world of sense and becomes artistic material. Such thought is quite a different thing from philosophic thought, and must never be interpreted as such. And, if we consider *Tristan und Isolde* a little more closely, the longing for love and the longing for death are both emotions directly opposed to the ethics of Schopenhauer, for in both of them the affirmation of the will is very clearly expressed. Everyone who follows the drama with intelligence will feel in his own heart that what really fills the souls of both heroes is the longing for death! For them death and love are brother and sister, like Siegmund and Sieglinde. That is not philosophy; it is the deepest, truest poetry, and can never be

grasped by the intellect, but only by the heart. And when Tristan says of himself:

"In des Tages eitlem Wähnen
bleibt ihm ein einzig Sehnen,—
das Sehnen hin
zur heil'gen Nacht,
wo ur-ewig,
einzig wahr
Liebes-Wonne ihm lacht!"[1]

And when their voices are united in the soul-piercing, I might say *sacred*, prayer:

"O sink' hernieder,
Nacht der Liebe,
gieb Vergessen,
dass ich lebe;
nimm mich auf
in deinen Schoss,
löse von
der Welt mich los!"[2]

one could kneel and pray with them! Here surely we have neither pessimism nor optimism, but simply love, which so few of us have known, and longing for death, the angel which has so often spread its redeeming wings over us.

Wrong as is the endeavour to find philosophy or philosophic influences in *Tristan und Isolde*, it is traceable to an observation in itself perfectly true, and one from which we may derive a very important lesson with respect to the new drama and one of its possible forms. The thought does not indeed occupy any more important position in *Tristan* than in Wagner's other plays, but it appears in what at first sight seems a more abstract form. How many a dramatic theoretician has puzzled and confused his own mind by seeking the explanation of this circumstance in some supposed philosophic tendency! If, instead of this, we seek the artistic causes which have led to it, we shall gain a deep view into the nature of the word-tone-drama.

Schiller said that music must become form; Wagner replied that it could only become form in the drama (see p. 208). In order to impress this upon the minds of my readers, without having to repeat what I have already said, I will again turn to the author from whom I have so often quoted before, Johann Gottfried Herder; the passage is of the greatest importance: "It is said that music is henceforward to be divorced from poetry and to remain within its own province? truly a dangerous separation for the human race! Music without words brings us into a dark region of ideas; it awakens feelings, in each after his own kind—feelings slumbering in the heart, which find no way, no guide through the floods of artificial wordless tones. Our tender, sensitive, and deli-

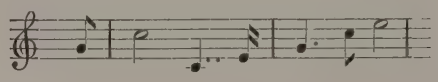
[1] In the vain illusion of the day, one longing still remains for the holy night, where alone the eternal, true joy of love awaits him.

[2] Oh, fall upon us night of love, grant me to forget that I live; take me up into thy bosom, release me from the world!

cately receptive nature needs all the senses which God has given to it; it can not dispense with one and trust to another, for it is only by the employment of *all* the senses and organs that the torch of life can be lighted and send forth its rays. Granting that the eye is the coldest, the most external and superficial of our senses, yet it is the quickest, the most comprehensive and the clearest of them all. . . . The ear is profound, emphatic, intensely emotional, but also very superstitious. Its vibrations are imperceptible, incalculable, and exert a sweet magic over the soul, but lead to nothing. May the muse preserve us from such mere poetry of the ear, without the eye to correct its forms and their measure."[1] It will be seen how closely Herder's view agrees with that of Wagner, and with his definition of his dramas as "deeds of music become visible" (ix. 364). I have several times, especially when speaking of *Lohengrin* (p. 265), drawn attention to this element of visibility, the property of addressing the eye, in Wagner's dramas. The fact that the *word* loses its significance as a medium of communication, that intrigues and counter-intrigues and play of action are reduced to a minimum, to allow the single main action of the piece to develop itself to its fullest extent, makes the part played by the eye of much greater importance. In the word-drama the eye had become more and more the servant of the reason; it hung upon the lips of the speaker, and closely watched his actions; in the tone-drama it is an artistic organ, and bears its share in the action, owing to the important part played by dumb gesture. In the spoken drama the eye had lost its power; here it resumes its old position. The name word-tone-drama is consequently insufficient, for it takes no account of the very important part played by the sense of sight. Of course the share of the eye varies very much with the different works. The *Nibelungen*, for instance, is especially a drama for the eye; however complex the action, it all takes place before our eyes, and even when the hero, Wotan, no longer appears upon the stage, the eye is the mediator between us and him, for we see what he sees. In *Tristan und Isolde*, where one of the heroes, or both, are always before us, where the inner action is only projected into the outer world in its most general outlines, and there is consequently little *to see*, the picture plays an essentially different part. A comparison of these two works, the *Ring* and *Tristan*, will be of great service in enabling us to gain perfectly clear ideas on this important point, and in showing the different ways in which thought may be utilized as artistic material.

What the spectator *sees* in the *Ring* is certainly just as grand, just as impressive, I might almost say in a certain sense just as important, as what he *hears*. The rape of the Rheingold, the robbery of the ring, the fight between the two giants for the ring, the entry of the gods into Walhalla, the scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde, the rock of the Walkyries and the "Feuerzauber" . . . surely all this is something more than "mere poetry of the ear," against which Herder raises his voice of warning; it is "poetry of the eye."

[1] *Ideen zur Geschichte und Kritik der Poesie und bildenden Künste*, Abt. 33.

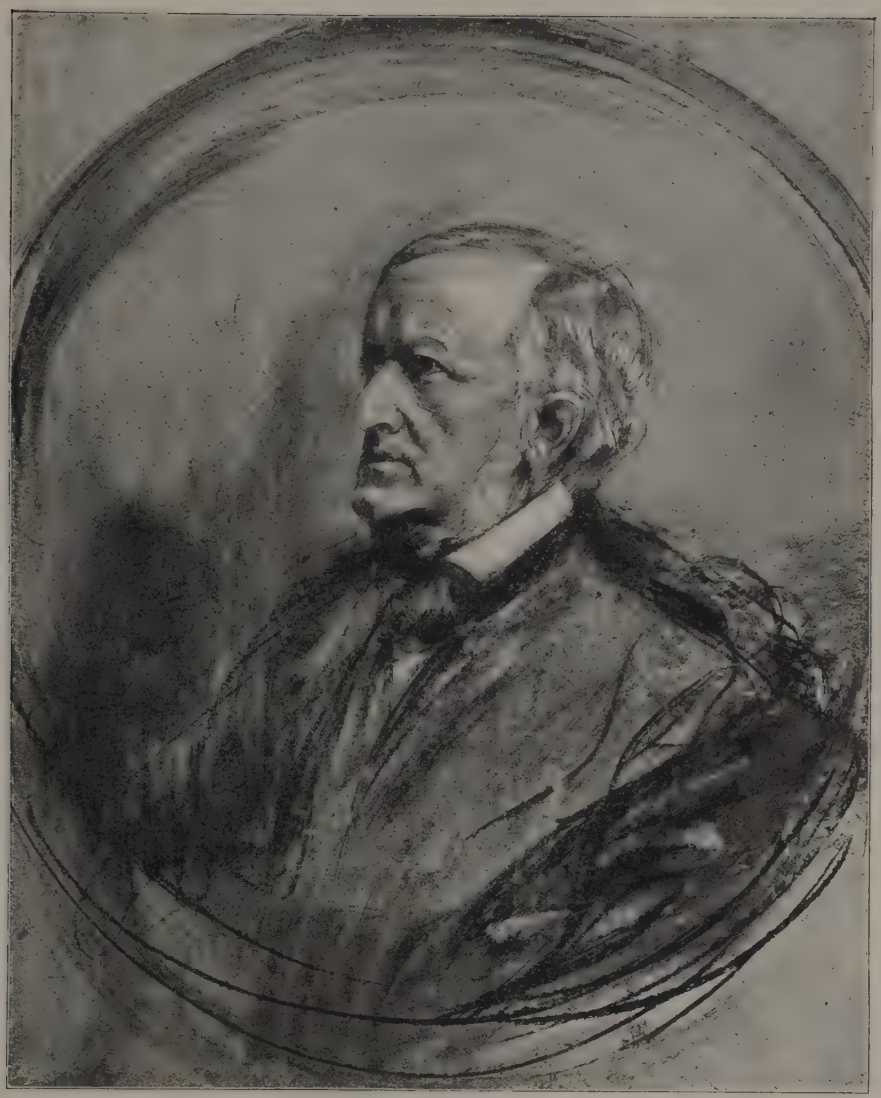
But the part played by the eye extends much further than this, and has to do as much with the *gesture* as with the scenic picture. I will quote one instance from *Rheingold:* Alberich has pronounced his fearful curse upon the ring; Fasolt has killed his brother for the sake of the gold; Erda has appeared to warn the god of "the end"; Wotan stands awe-struck, care and fear have chained his senses, to Fricka's caresses he answers not a word, but remains absorbed within himself; suddenly the thunder-clouds part and show the newly-built palace of the gods, lighted by the rays of the evening sun; Wotan's eye rests upon it for a moment, as if entranced with its beauty; suddenly the clear note of the trumpet rings out

Wotan seizes a sword lying on the ground, and holding it proudly aloft, he exclaims:

"*So*—grüss ich die Burg,
sicher vor Bang und Grau'n!"[1]

The "*so*" is a thought which for the present only finds, and can find, expression in the gesture, and which through the gesture attains a vastly higher significance than if Wotan indulged—as he would do in a spoken drama—in a long soliloquy about a thought which has only just at that moment entered his mind as a sudden inspiration. The spectator is not left for an instant in doubt about the meaning of that *so!* the gesture has told him everything; it is: "heroism against gold!" The working out of the thought had to be deferred till later; but in this sudden resolve lies eternal truth, the source of everything which Wotan could and must achieve; it is this which puts the last finishing stroke and completes our knowledge of the character of the hero. This inner movement of the soul, out of which the gesture has grown, is also expressed for the ear. "Only by the employment of *all* the senses can the torch of life be lighted," says Herder, and in very truth this simple C major chord (in the characteristic timbre of the trumpet) sends forth its rays, and is inseparably connected with the gesture in which Wotan's soul is laid bare before our eyes, just as plainly as that of Alberich when he greedily seizes the gold with both hands. At various times in the further course of the history of the race of heroes, when Siegmund is in sorest distress for a sword, when Siegfried fights the dragon, these same tones are heard; no process of reflective synthesis is then necessary; we do not need every time to recall the figure of Wotan; the gesture has determined the emotion once for all; has joined the distant with the present, as music alone could not have done; the unity of music is purely formal; here the eye "corrects" (as Herder says), and the reflective faculty, as "the highest function of the artistic man,"[2] has followed the entire

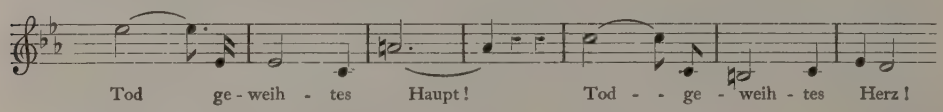
[1] So greet I the burg—safe from fear and terror!

[2] "The seat of art proper is in the understanding" (Novalis).



RICHARD WAGNER

course of the action from the first. And at last, when the procession with Siegfried's body has vanished into the mists rising from the Rhine, and the theme, amplified and surrounded by a glory of tones, again reaches our ears, we know that now Wotan's great thought, his "*So greet I the Burg!*" has been carried to its grave. This one example may suffice instead of many. *Tristan und Isolde* is in its whole conception far from being such a *Schau-Spiel*[1] as *der Ring des Nibelungen* or *Parsifal.* The place, the scenic process are scarcely of any account at all; Isolde hands the poison to her lover in "a chamber resembling a tent," the second act is in the dark, the third in the outer court of a deserted castle; the drama is so entirely within, the outer world has so completely ceased to have any meaning for Tristan and Isolde, that the surroundings are of no importance whatever.[2] The gesture however is very important indeed, but only at two moments; in the first act the handing of the cup of poison; in the second the extinguishing of the torch. A more striking expression of the love-longing in its significance as longing for death, which forms the whole action in this drama, could scarcely be imagined in the way of symbolic pantomime. Here, too, the eye is not left to itself, thought and hearing also assist. In the earlier portion of the first act, before she hands the poison, when she only sees Tristan in the distance, Isolde exclaims (accompanied by pianissimo chords of the wind, allowing every word to be heard):



In the passage from the *Nibelungen* which I quoted just now, "*So, grüss ich die Burg!*" the thought was not yet thought out, and the gesture told everything; here in *Tristan* however the long-concealed thought is completed; no gesture accompanies the words; on the contrary Isolde remains as if transfixed, gazing at Tristan. Faintly at the word "Haupt" she indicates him; at the word "Herz," herself. The understanding supplies the place of the eye, the thought that of the gesture.[3] The music however fixes this moment, when full knowledge is attained and the action proper begins, in the expressive theme which I have quoted; it afterwards returns unchanged, first when Tristan with final resolution places the cup to his lips:

"Vergessens güt'ger Trank
dich trink' ich sonder Wank,"[4]

and again when Isolde dashes the torch to the ground. Both these actions

[1] Lit. "See-play."

[2] Appia's remark is very true: "Dans Tristan la mise en scène doit se réduire à un minimum tel, qu'il ne saurait être question d'illusion" (*La mise en scène du drame Wagnérien*, p. 24).

[3] One must be careful of formulas, but I think that the following, which I once noted down, contains much truth. *Nibelungenring:* Visibility—gesture. *Tristan:* Intelligibility—thought.

[4] Kind drink of forgetfulness, I drink thee without flinching."

mean the same thing: longing for love and for death, swelled and fused to a single, all-embracing desire: "Death-devoted head! death-devoted heart!"

We are now in a position to realize the peculiar character of the *Tristan* drama, and why it is that the thought is here predominant in this particular form.

The draught of poison brings about the confession of their love; the extinction of the torch unites the lovers in the fervent prayer: "Release us from the world! Banish our fear, kind Death!" Death brings the confession of their love to each other, and the gift which love brings for them is death:

bricht mein Blick sich
wonn'-erblendet,
erbleicht die Welt
mit ihrem Blenden.[1]

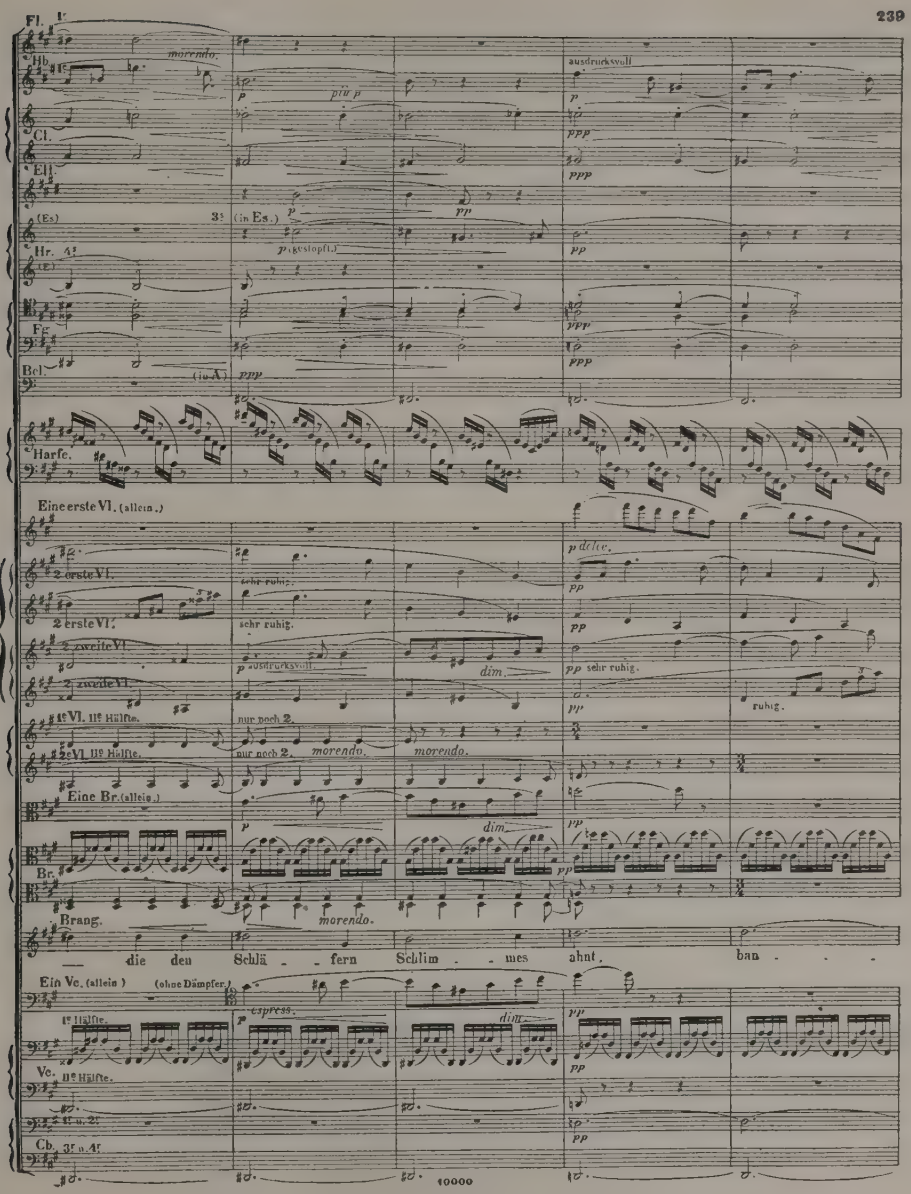
The *eye* cannot possibly have any further share in their lives; they spoke truth when they said: "so starben wir"—"we have died"; for our sense-world they are dead. The poet could give us nothing more to *see*. Wagner himself says of *Tristan*: "scarcely anything takes place in it except the music" (ix. 365). Could there be anything more untrue, artistically more unjustifiable, than to attribute a philosophic train of thought to people such as these! *Wotan* was a thinker; Isolde would be better described as a female Siegfried. But music cannot stand alone upon its own feet, it must become form, and this it can only do if its conceptions are corrected and adjusted by the eye. And for this reason the thought (which is indirect sensibility), is brought forward in *Tristan* as in no other of Wagner's works for the stage. It is noticeable how throughout the second and third acts the thought is again and again referred back to the two *pictures* which have been enforced upon us by every means at the disposal of art, that is, to the death-draught, and the extinguishing of the torch, events which have actually taken place and have been visibly represented. The natural antitheses of the pictures are also represented, again as visible pictures, not as concepts; to the night of death, the day; to the extinguished torch, the light of the sun "with its rays of vain delight." Not unfrequently indeed the thought glides off; the language is hurried away by the waves of emotion, which receives its definite expression at each moment in the ever-flowing stream of music, and carried to the point where words almost cease to have meaning, where they approach the unspeakable, the unthinkable, where, as Wagner so truly says, the thoughts are no longer capable of clear articulation, and can only be faltered (iii. 127). But the eye always corrects; everything is referred back to the pictures, the visible action which has gone before. The talk about death and day, night and sun, must not be construed philosophically; rather may we learn from it how such material may be utilized for the drama, how music may still remain the mightiest vehicle of expression without neces-

[1] When my vision fades, rapture blinds; when the world grows dim with its blinding glare.

sitating the "dangerous separation" of music and poetry spoken of by Herder, without sundering the poetry of the ear from the forms of the eye.

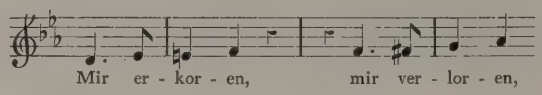
Word and Tone.

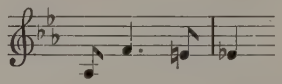
These remarks would lead naturally on to the very important question of the relation between language and music. It has already been discussed in general terms in the section on Wagner's art-doctrines, but we shall gain a much fuller understanding of the subject by an example, and I know nothing more fascinating in Wagner's works than the study of his language,—by which I mean neither the word-language nor the tone-language by themselves, but to use Wagner's own words: "the creative alliance of gesture, tones and words" (iv. 120). More especially does the alliance between words and music offer an inexhaustible field for artistic invention. In Wagner's dramas the share borne respectively by music and words in the totality of expression varies every instant. He has himself indicated the method to which he was led by his artistic intuition very clearly in a few words. "Only where music is the most important vehicle of expression can it fully unfold itself; where for instance the *dramatic* expression is paramount, the music will subordinate itself thereto. Owing to the power possessed by music of imperceptibly following the thoughts expressed in the words, without remaining quite silent, it can leave them almost alone, whilst still affording them its support" (iii. 189). And perhaps in no other work is the word-tone language so rich and varied as in *Tristan und Isolde*. There are moments when the word-language is unmistakably the most important for the dramatic expression; many more when the thought is its principal element, and still more when the music is all important, so that the spoken words retire more and more into the background, leaving the music absolute sway "to reveal everything on which the words are silent, because the tone alone can reveal it." But this is by no means all. In the works of Wagner's second epoch the word-language by itself exhibits endless refinements of construction not dreamed of by the careless reader, and quite incomprehensible to the one-sided literary man who is unable to perceive the organic connection existing between the words and the changeful expression of the music, and how the whole is determined by the dramatic requirements of the moment. Passages may be found in *Tristan* where for instance alliteration would naturally occur of itself, but is purposely avoided, to prevent any possible harshness in the language; the rimes are numerous, occasionally all the verses are rimed, and female rimes are employed, imparting to the language itself a musical sound. In other places again the final rime is replaced by assonance or alliteration, but in a very varying degree, from the cautious employment of alliteration for instance in Marke's speech, to such moments of dramatic intensity as Tristan's "*Sühne-eid*," or "oath of expiation" (the instant when he is about to drink the poison), where "the all-uniting might of alliteration" rules supreme. Sometimes we find only assonance without rime or alliteration.

Obviously if such an enquiry is to be of any use it must be very thorough, and include many carefully selected examples, for which my space would be

Facsimile page from the Score of *Tristan und Isolde* (reduced)

insufficient. I have given a few hints—they are nothing more—for such a study, with special reference to *Tristan und Isolde*, in my *Drame Wagnérien*.[1] Some good remarks on the language of *Tristan* are to be found in Franz Müller's *Tristanbuch* (1865, p. 177, *et. seq.*), but unfortunately the word-language is here treated apart from the tone-language, a process which can never lead to any useful result. I will therefore content myself with bringing two examples of the most simple relation between word and tone.

I have already observed that the whole drama of *Tristan* is contained in the words: "*Mir erkoren, mir verloren!*" These reflect the entire tragedy; now for the first time does the sufferer survey the full extent of his misery with the inexorable severity of logical thought; here therefore the word must of necessity take precedence. The orchestra is accordingly almost silent; the violas and some of the violins, muted and pianissimo, are the only accompaniment to the voice, or rather they *follow* the voice:



and so, though the words are scarcely more than spoken, there grows out of them the most important musical theme of the whole work, the death-motive given above. As Isolde pauses, sighing, before she continues "hehr und heil," and again before "kühn und feig," a single English horn is heard,

even the grief with which the pauses are loaded finds expression and becomes a principal part of the symphonic edifice! Here we see how the word may predominate in Wagner's dramas when required by them; and we also see how it is with the "subjection of music" of which Wagner speaks.

Now let us take an example of the very opposite case. In the second act, after the lovers have offered their fervent prayer, "Löse von der Welt uns los," they lean back, and remain silent and unmoved; the spectator almost thinks their prayer has been heard, and that they have found release in the "love-death" they long for; but they still live; like Sieglinde "they must breathe the air of earth"; they hear the distant voice of the faithful Brangäne as she watches:

"die den Schläfern
Schlimmes ahnt,
bange zum
Erwachen mahnt!"[2]

[1] Pp. 125-144, and in more detail in Lessmann's *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, 1888, p. 283. I regret having always to refer to my own works, but I am not aware of these questions having ever been treated elsewhere.

[2] "Foreboding evil to the sleepers and gently bidding them awake."

This sound is, we might almost say, the only sign we have that the heroes are not dead. It is a mere voice, not an articulate thought. Tristan and Isolde scarcely hear the words; they see nothing; their senses have almost departed from the world. The voice is a timid warning, breaking through the night of death in which the lovers are sunk, the shadow of their waking consciousness and reflection; the words are of no account, and indeed they are so far away that neither we nor they can distinguish them. It is a soft, plaintive tone, encircled and interwoven with the thousand voices of the night, "far from the sun, far from the sundering day." A single page of the score at this passage will give the reader a notion of the "wonder-realm" of poetic expression at Wagner's disposal whenever its principal vehicle was music.

Parsifal

> As old age begins to approach, my thoughts turn to things lofty, earnest and worthy of a Christian man.
>
> Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.

The awakening of sympathy.

When we read in Lessing "the only object of the tragic stage is to awaken sympathy," we might feel tempted to call *Parsifal* the drama of all dramas. All through the work the sight of pain and suffering is before our eyes. The first

Scene from *Parsifal*. Paul Joukowsky.

thing we see is King Amfortas being taken to his bath, after a night sleepless with pain; as he lies upon his couch he presents a touching picture of physical

exhaustion "after the wild pains of the night." In the second scene he tells us that the raging pain of his wound is a small thing compared with the pains of hell within his soul, and in impressive tones he calls to God:

"Erbarmen! Erbarmen!
Allerbarmer, ach! Erbarmen!"

("Mercy! mercy! all-merciful God, have mercy!") Not only does the sinful guardian of the Grail suffer; but all suffer with him, good and bad, guilty and innocent; the voice of Titurel rises in anguish from the grave; Kundry's prayer is "pity! pity for me!" Klingsor laments over his "fearful need!" The knights languish "powerless and without a leader," and are personified in Gurnemanz; he describes their state, and we hear their bitter lament: "Alas! alas! thou guardian of the Grail!" The picture of suffering is spread over the whole world; the knights can no longer succour the faithful and the good when oppressed: "they totter about, pale and wretched." The wail runs through all Nature; even the lovely flower-maidens in their unconscious innocence enter, crying "wehe! wehe!" "alas! alas!" and leave with "alas! what sorrow!" And the trustful swan, "who had arisen to seek its mate, with her to circle over the lake," falls to the ground, struck by the fatal arrow. Truly if the object of tragedy is to awaken sympathy, this object is attained in a remarkable degree in what is brought to view (*i.e.* by what we *see*) in *Parsifal*. All this, however, is only the frame-work of the action proper. In *Meistersinger*, and again in *der Ring des Nibelungen*, we were misled into thinking that the action was complete, when suddenly the real hero appeared, and showed us what the poet himself regarded as the true action of his drama. In *Parsifal* this is still more evident; the hero, Parsifal himself, is a new figure amongst these events; only at the close does his life-drama unite with that of the suffering knights. The real action lies in the awakening of sympathy in the heart of Parsifal, and in its effect upon his inner psychic life. For this reason *Parsifal* may be called the drama of dramas; the stage that arouses our sympathy is that of the whole world, and in each act the real action begins when sympathy has been awakened in the heart of the hero, not before.

The Omnipotence of the Will.

The action could only attain real tragic greatness through the greatness of the hero's soul. In a fragment dating from the Parsifal time Wagner says: "the point cannot lie in the mere preservation of the weak by the strong," and he adds, "not sympathy with the weak, but the sympathy of the strong must be our object" (*cf.* E., 121). And indeed Parsifal is conspicuous for strength; herein lies his kinship with Siegfried; like Siegfried he is a hero of action. In 1856 Wagner had a very similar subject to deal with, and treated it quite differently; it was in *die Sieger*, which comes between the first sketch of *Tristan* (1854-55) and the first sketch of *Parsifal* (1857). The scene is laid in India, during the Buddhist period. The heroes, Ananda and Prakriti, are, in accordance with the ideas of strict Hindu pessimism, only able to preserve their strength by

renunciation, by the vow of chastity. An early sketch of *Parsifal* is said to have closed with the words:

> "Gross ist der Zauber des Begehrens,
> Grösser ist die Kraft des Entsagens!"[1]

But *Parsifal*, as we now possess it, knows nothing of resignation; sympathy here leads to deeds, and only by deeds is victory achieved. Of all Wagner's heroes Parsifal is the most sparing of words. In the first act he scarcely speaks at all, in the third very little; in the second (where his supposed talkativeness has so exercised the minds of the critics) his part consists of barely a hundred lines, some of them containing one word, or two to four words. Parsifal's life is *action*. We see at once, at the very beginning, how entirely he is under the dominion of his will, *i.e.* of the impulse to *act;* he has made his bow for himself, as Siegfried made his sword; he has left the "happy desert," where he lived with his mother, to fight his way in the world; his delight is "to fight with wild animals and great men," he strikes the eagle in its flight, and we learn from Kundry that "caitiffs and giants all fear his arm"; in the mere joy of life he has forgotten his mother; he wants to kill the messenger who announces her death; unarmed he subdues the knights in Klingsor's magic castle. Such is the hero of Wagner's last drama; externally rough (not coarse; *coarseness* is the outcome of civilization!); delighting in battle and deeds of daring; his most conspicuous trait an unbridled, stormy will.

This is very important to observe, owing to the fact that, in spite of the clearness and lucidity of the exposition, Parsifal's character in particular has been the subject of the most absurd misunderstandings; partly perhaps because the outer events, the battles, etc., which as we know cannot be represented in the word-tone-drama, are not represented here, but only the inner events, the highest moments of the psychic life; partly because many men really think in their hearts that to flee from the arms of lust to save all mankind shows less character than to do the opposite; one is called "will-less insensibility," the other "impetuous energy."[2] And yet the earlier poets clearly recognized *purity* of the sensual impulses as a *necessary* element of Parsifal's character. Consider for instance the entrancing picture which Wolfram von Eschenbach has drawn of the maidenly purity of the hero, when crowned with victory after his sufferings (verses 6050, *et seq.*). But with Wagner this conspicuous trait acquires a high dramatic significance. Where any indications of a monastic vow of celibacy are to be found in *Parsifal* it would be difficult to say (unless it be with Klingsor, "the wicked man over the mountains"). Titurel, "the holy hero," is the father of Amfortas, and Parsifal is the father of Lohengrin.[3] The people, however, have

[1] Great is the magic of desire; greater that of renunciation.

[2] Literal quotations from an article on *Parsifal*, by Maximilian Nordau.

[3] Wagner took the conception of the hero of celibacy from Buddhist legend, but very soon gave it up again, as we have seen.

always recognized the psychological and physiological value of chastity, as well as its moral value, and know very well that in this special instance the moral and physical law are at one. That the dragon can only be slain by a chaste hero is a very old feature of the legend, and recurs in the stories of the most distant nations, as in the Chinese story of Aladdin, where the stone cannot be raised by the magician, but only by an innocent youth. Wagner's Siegfried, when he slays Fafner, has never even seen a woman. But before he enters into the world Brünnhilde has become his wife. As long as he preserves his innocence, he is proof even against the cunning of Mime, and can learn to understand the warning voice of the bird;[1] afterwards he is misled by sensual lust, and unwittingly drinks the draught of forgetfulness. Just as Siegfried can defy the monster, so can the innocent Parsifal defy and vanquish the "arch-devil," the "rose of hell," Kundry. Clearly this could only have been accomplished by a hero whose power was yet unbroken by sensual delights; this comes out especially in the further course of the drama, for it is the pain, the actual physical pain felt by Parsifal at the embrace of Kundry, that suddenly calls up the picture of the suffering Amfortas before his eyes; such pain could only have been felt by a man who was innocent, by the "pure fool," not by one who knew the world.[2]

The violence of the pain which he feels, and the vigorous efforts with which he resists the temptation, and flees from the embrace of lust, are proof, not only of his purity, but of his physical strength, and of the unconquerable force of his will. As with all heroes of action, Parsifal's resolves are always sudden; they are at once recognized, and carried out consistently to the end. He cannot attain his object too quickly; in the first act he has scarcely shot the swan and uttered his boast, "in flight I strike whatever flies!" when he breaks his bow and throws away his arrows; he has scarcely laid his head trustfully upon Kundry's knee, and felt the kiss from her lips, when he casts her violently from him and exclaims loudly: "Fiend! avaunt from me!" If there is any Buddhism at all in Parsifal it can only be in so far as the four rules of conduct leading to "the holy truth of the way to the extinction of suffering" are observed: right thought, right resolve, right words, right deeds.[3]

The character of genius.

The impetuous strength of will so conspicuous in Wagner's *Parsifal* is however a mere external adjunct, so to speak the raw material at the disposal of the hero; it is usually latent; we only see it displayed in certain moments, when necessary to enable us fully to understand the psychology of a firm though impulsive character, and to realize the fearful intensity of the forces which act

[1] In the first edition of the *Nibelungenring*, that of 1853, he says, "I think my mother sings to me."

[2] The difficulty, which many writers of every nation experience in comprehending this simple process, might lead one to suppose that at the present day we had sunk morally lower than the French of the Regency. Even the Chevalier de Faublas speaks of the burning pain which he felt the first time that the Marquise de B. threw her arms round him, and describes the desperate efforts which he made to free himself from her embrace!

[3] Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 2nd edition, p. 139.

upon his soul. One very profound remark of Schopenhauer will assist us to see through this outer shell of the soul into its inner depths. "The will, regarded objectively, is a fool, subjectively, a delusion."[1] Parsifal, too, regarded objectively, is a fool, as it were the will personified; subjectively the most remarkable thing about him is the power exercised over him by his imagination. Psychologically this is quite justifiable. Whether we consider such characters as Napoleon and Alexander, or their antipodes, Buddha and St Francis of Assisi, we always find that an abnormally developed will, capable of ruling whole nations, and placing its stamp upon entire epochs, is united with a development equally abnormal of another quality, which may well be called imagination, enabling it to do great deeds. The will by itself is blind, it runs its head against the first wall it meets. A strong will, not united with strong intelligence, and especially power of observation, is nothing more than obstinacy, the "*asinorum virtus*." The power of observation may however show itself in very different directions, as in the examples just mentioned. With Parsifal they constituted what we understand by the word *genius*. Goethe somewhere gives a table of the nine possible modes of action; the lowest is the accidental, the highest that of genius. The influence exerted by Parsifal upon his surroundings, the mode of action which is his by nature, is that of genius, and is seen to be such because he not only possesses the power of observation, but because intuition with him predominates over reflection, and above all because of his faculty of seeing through the single given fact to the eternity beyond. The lunatic sees something different to what is really there; a straw appears to him as a rose, his own face in a looking-glass as the moon; genius also lives in another world, owing, however, not to distortion, but to an amplification of its vision, so that it sees more than another, and can distinguish the relationships between phenomena lying widely apart.[2] Genius makes for unity. As Leibnitz says, "The greater the power, the more does it exhibit: *much out of one and in one*." This mode of view is that of the artist, the genius, as contrasted with that of the thinker, the philosopher. And when Wagner indicates the goal of the noblest art to be "to step in where life's bitter earnest clouds the intellect, to dissolve reality into a dream, and by this means to show us that what seemed reality was itself a dream" (viii. 37), these words exactly describe Parsifal's intellectual character. He is an artist, not in creativeness, but in life; in his earlier letters Wagner expresses his longing for this state of "living art," and founds on it his hopes for a better future (*cf.*, for example, U., 147). Attempts have often been made to trace resemblances between Wagner and his heroes, as if he had endeavoured to present a picture

[1] Schopenhauer, *Sammtliche Werke*, iii. 407.

[2] One would scarcely believe what nonsense is talked at the present day in the name of science. Because some men of genius have suffered from epileptic fits, Professor Lombroso teaches that genius is an incidental symptom of epilepsy! Similarly too he brings genius and madness into the same category, forgetting however that the distinguishing mark of genius, especially that in which it differs from madness, is sober wisdom, a special power of acute reflection.

of himself in his works; Tannhäuser especially has been selected for such comparisons, and even Walther von Stolzing, by some very imaginative people! It seems however to be forgotten that of all the qualities of genius, Rienzi only possesses its nobility, Tannhäuser its temperament, Lohengrin its idealism, Tristan its devouring passion, Wotan its profound thought, Hans Sachs its wide heart. Parsifal alone is a genius; the unbending strength of his will, and his peculiar gift of recognizing and seeing through the delusion which underlies the apparent reality of the world, stamp him as such. He perceives the truth in the dreams of his own mind; it leads him on to the achievement of deeds which to another would seem impossible. In so far therefore a resemblance between Wagner and Parsifal may perhaps be traced, but we must guard against attaching too great importance to such comparisons.

The hero as victor.

Those of my readers who wish for a guide through the action, which is developed in *Parsifal* in a way quite new in the history of the drama, will find one in my former treatise, *le Drame Wagnérien*, where the subject is treated so fully that I could add little here without repeating what I have already said. Here, as in the other works of the second epoch of Wagner's life, the important thing to note is that the action is laid entirely within. The essential, clearly recognizable centre of all is the Grail; it is the visible symbol, supplying the connection between the processes in Parsifal's heart, and his surroundings. As a silent spectator of the scene in the Grail temple, he hears the lament of Amfortas and the chant of the Grail knights telling of faith, hope and love; he is privileged to witness the unveiling of the holy vessel, and the kiss of brotherhood exchanged between the knights divinely strengthened by its presence; the impressions which he here receives serve as his guide during his future life; hereby, too, unity is given to the music, and the tones with which the picture is as it were surrounded (the lament of Amfortas, the songs of the knights, etc.) become capable of expressing the processes in Parsifal's inmost heart. These processes form the actual drama; or rather this one process, the gradual development of the simple youth, blindly following his own will, to the fully conscious man, chosen to fulfil a high mission, and subordinating his will to the service thereof, so that with his will thus purified he overcomes every hindrance in battle, and is at last crowned as the strongest of all heroes. Of the impotence of celibacy there is no trace. In *Parsifal*, the work of Wagner's later life, he has accomplished that which the mere word-drama could never do, he has conceived a tragic hero, who, instead of succumbing, emerges victorious from the struggle of life.

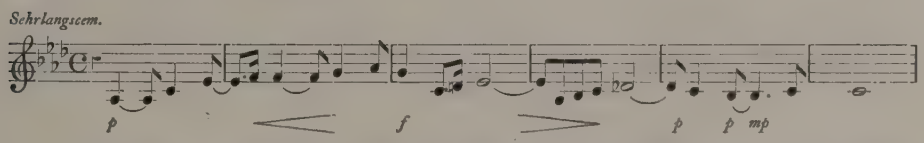
Wolfram's *Parzival*.

It is not necessary for me to draw a comparison with Wolfram von Eschenbach's romance in rimes, often euphemistically called an epic. What I said of *Tristan* is equally true of *Parsifal*. At first Wagner founded his dramas upon romances; *e.g.* those of Gozzi, Bulwer Lytton, and Shakespeare's dramatized romance, *Measure for Measure;* the reasons why he ceased to do so in later life are explained in detail in *Oper und Drama*. The Parsifal legend came originally

from France and from the East; there are many who prefer Wolfram's version of it to Wagner's, but people who find the scene between Kundry and Parsifal—lasting thirty-five minutes—too long are not likely to have read the twenty-five thousand verses, of which Wolfram's poem consists, all through. And it is impossible to discuss matters with people who really think Wolfram's description of the supernatural nourishment by the Grail,

"Wonach einer bot die Hand,
Da er alles stehen fand:
Speise warm, Speise kalt,
Speise neu und wieder alt,
Fisch und Fleisch, Wild und Zahm,"[1]

more beautiful than Wagner's:



Still less is it necessary for me to discuss the ethical and religious tendencies supposed to be exhibited by Wagner's *Parsifal*. In his essay on the Royal Opera House in Vienna (vii. 376), Wagner quotes the famous words of the

Religious interpretation.

Scene from *Parsifal*, by Paul Joukowsky.

Emperor Joseph II.: "The Theatre should serve to ennoble the taste, and raise the morals of the nation," commenting upon it as follows: "for practical application this thought should perhaps be formulated more definitely: the morality of

[1] Where you look, at once you find
Savoury dish of every kind;
Viands hot and viands cold,
Viands new, and others old,
Fish and flesh, wild and tame.

the nation should be raised *by ennobling the taste.* Manifestly art cannot exert any direct influence on morality except by forming the taste." These words are true, too, of *Parsifal.* It is not intended to teach either morality or religion; it is the artistic representation of a great *religious* character, using the word in its noblest, loftiest sense. Let us take Herder's words to heart. "Artistic taste can be destroyed by prayer just as easily as by study; once gone, it rarely returns, or only after a long time." One more remark may be made in this connection, and it is not without importance. In *Parsifal*—as in *Tannhäuser*—the author enjoys one advantage in common with the Greek poets, namely that he addresses mythical and religious perceptions possessed by all, and still living within us. This circumstance is especially valuable in connection with the classical simplicity of his work. For the rest I have already observed that in *Parsifal*, all the historic and dogmatic Christianity of Wagner's *Jesus von Nazareth* is removed, and of the ethical tendency of *die Sieger* not a trace is left.

The new concept of dramatic action.

Now that we have considered the four great works of Wagner's conscious period of creation in his new art-form, it will be of interest—more especially from the point of view of art pure and simple—to attend for a moment to the new conception of action which they exhibit. This is interesting, not only on æsthetic, but also on biographical grounds. Wagner's faculty of at once grasping things in their inmost nature could not be so conspicuous a mark of his works, were it not a characteristic quality of his intellect. Let us return to what has already been said, at least in part, in my *Drame Wagnérien.*[1]

Though it is perfectly true that the noblest and truest dramatic poetry has always aimed at representing inner psychic processes, hitherto it could only do so indirectly, since the only movements which it could represent were those of the body and of the intellect. In Wagner's Drama (which, as it has its root in the German genius, and corresponds exactly to its requirements, I have proposed shall be called the German Drama) another element is added, immediately conveying the movements of the soul, namely music.

It is well known that in the life of the ancient Greeks music held a position almost inconceivable to us who live in modern times. At the best time of Greek art, music and gymnastics formed the basis of their educational system. Wagner says in his *Beethoven:* "It would seem to us as if the music of the Hellenes penetrated their entire phenomenal world, and became fused with the laws of its perception. The numbers of Pythagoras certainly are only to be comprehended as living facts with the aid of music. The architect built in accordance with the laws of musical rhythm; the sculptor conceived the human form by those of harmony; the rules of melody made the poet into a singer, and the drama was projected on to the stage from the song of the chorus" (ix. 145). The entire

[1] P. 120, *et seq.*

life of the Greek was therefore surrounded by a musical atmosphere, and it cannot be doubted that in the drama, too, a very important part was played by the music, especially when religious emotion had to be awakened, or else when it was necessary to impart either a cheerful, or a warlike or terrible, character to the action, and the influence which it exerted over the verse-construction must have been enormous. The whole construction of the Greek drama, however, bears evidence that music did not form one of the *constructive* elements of its composition. This is fully accounted for by the backward state of music among the Greeks, as contrasted with the high perfection of their language, making it impossible for music to have any real, direct share in realizing the dramatic intent proper. The part played by the eye, too, was quite general, that of awakening a certain mood. The colossal figure of the actor on his *cothurnus*, the fixed expression of the mask, equally distinguishable from near and from afar, are elements which cannot have failed to produce an impression upon the naïve receptivity of the spectator; but this again can only have been quite general, and did not form an organic portion of the living artistic expression as it grew into being before his eyes. In the Greek drama then, the senses of sight and hearing are only employed incidentally, to assist the total impression; the work itself appeals exclusively to the *understanding*. Monologues, dialogues, disputes, accounts by eye-witnesses of events which never take place before our eyes on the stage; the impressions made by the whole upon the onlookers, the chorus; such are the elements out of which the Greek drama is constructed. The action is communicated exclusively by means of the word, the organ of the understanding, and the chief object of the poet was to obtain the utmost beauty of his only artistic organ—language. Words alone could avail to bring the picture before the eyes of the spectator, and, so far as was possible, he had to imbue them with the ineffable, incomparable might of musical expression.

The drama of the Renaissance, which reached its highest development in Shakespeare, differs from the antique drama especially in calling in the eye to aid the understanding. The mask is replaced by the changeful play of the real features of the face, the heavy step of the *cothurnus* by quick movements and gestures, flashing like lightning into the inmost heart of the spectator; bare narrations by scenes actually enacted before our eyes. It will perhaps be objected that Shakespeare's stage had little or no scenery in the strict sense. That is true, but it is of little consequence. The actor moved as a living man almost in the midst of his audience, not one movement of a muscle was lost, and with this arrangement of the stage a painted canvas background would have had little meaning. And it must not be forgotten that, although the scenery was slight, the costumes were rigidly correct, and that the machinery (under the influence of Shakespeare's own plays) attained a very high degree of perfection. Evidently the whole idea of dramatic action must have undergone a complete revolution when the aid of the eye was called in to co-operate in the artistic construction. In my last chapter I quoted the words of Herder: "Sophocles

and Shakespeare have, as tragic poets, only the name in common; the genius of their works is quite different" (*v.s.*, p. 216). For my present purposes, however, it will suffice if I refer to one single point in which the antique drama differs from the dramas of Shakespeare; namely, that the result of invoking the sense of sight was *to lay the action more within.* The hero is placed more directly before us; we see not only into his eyes, but into his heart. In the antique drama, where the actual events were only narrated, this visible, though unseen, action became all-important, because of the number and vigour of the narrations required; but here, where everything is enacted before our eyes, they lose importance beside the psychic processes, and the space occupied by the latter becomes continually greater, so that the conception of *dramatic action* must be widened, and laid more within. We have now arrived at one very important result; without the coöperation of the eye the dramatic representation of such works as *Hamlet* and *Lear*, which are almost pure tragedies of the soul, would have been impossible. The importance of the descriptive element, language, has, as might have been expected, become less; but the *musical* element in Shakespeare's language is so marked that the translations of his plays are to the originals very much what a skeleton is to a vigorous, living youth.

Richard Wagner, speaking of his own mode of procedure, says that "our great (German) masters have always been very near it" (vii. 175). To the action of the understanding and the eye, as constructive elements of the drama, he now adds that of the ear, and not merely the ear as the instrument for receiving the language of the understanding, but as the musical sense, capable of communicating the inmost psychic movements directly to the soul of the hearer, and with a definiteness unknown to words. This had of course only become possible by the development which music had undergone in the course of centuries, whereby it had gained a power of expression and flexibility equal to that of language; especially did it require unlimited mobility, if it was to be employed for the drama. "In the invention of modern music by our incomparable German masters," Wagner writes, "the corner-stone is laid for the birth of a dramatic art, of the expression and power of which no Greek could form an idea. Every possibility has been gained of achieving the highest" (viii. 88). The dramatic poet, by allowing the eye to participate in the impression, had, as we have seen, achieved the possibility of making out of a subject such as that of Hamlet, a *bonâ fide* dramatic action, which the Greek drama of the understanding could never have done. Wagner made a step beyond the poet of Hamlet. To the reflecting, depicting, understanding, to the directly perceiving eye, he added the revelation of music from the unseen world of the inner man. Herewith he has done something more than merely make a step forwards; he has provided the drama with the language for which it has been striving from the very first. For the object of the drama has always been the unspeakable; its composers have always known that "the true greatness of the poet appears in that on which he

is silent; it is in his silence that he tells us the unspeakable." But how was the dramatist to be silent? Words were indispensable for him to communicate his thought. Even with his last breath Hamlet speaks; otherwise we should know nothing more about him; with a deep sigh of final release he says: "The rest is silence." It is just this silence which contains in itself the deepest and most eternal truths that spring from the breast of man; this *rest* it is which the musician causes to sound, for he disposes over a new language, in which things infinite can be expressed with definiteness not to be misunderstood. And let it not be supposed that music can do this alone, with its own strength. It could not (see the section on Wagner's Art-doctrine, p. 208); Wagner knew that from the very first; he never tried to separate the music from the language and the scenic picture; only in the drama can music attain form, only in the drama can it pass from the domain of caprice to that of necessity; this highest human art-work, the drama, was therefore always the object for which he strove. *Because* he was a great musician he could not help desiring the drama. Like the drama of Sophocles, that of Wagner showed situations only to be clearly grasped by the understanding; like that of Shakespeare it brought definite individual forms, definite events; besides all this it revealed, with the convincing power of a Beethoven, the hidden mystery of the visible dramatic situation, the man himself within his outer form, the psychic process within the external action. As Parsifal is carried along by his will, so too are we carried away by the impetuous force of music, and made amenable to the poet. That is merely the first outward preparation. And it teaches us, with Parsifal, to look within, to that which is hidden, to hear "the blades of grass, the flowers and the leaves talk trustfully to us," "to recognize in our own suffering that of our brother in distress"; in our lament the divine lament of all nature. Here again the conception of dramatic action is laid more within, and made more general, with respect to Shakespeare's drama, just as had been done by Shakespeare himself with respect to the Greek; laid within, inasmuch as the tone is the only means we have of seeing into the invisible; made general, because music is never concerned with the special, the individual, but only with the general, so that its effect is to give to the stage picture the character of a parable, and without any reflection on our part to raise it to the dignity of a symbol of something eternal and unbounded.

Wagner then could represent actions which a Sophocles or a Shakespeare would never have ventured to attempt, and not only *could* he do this, but he was *obliged* to. In *die Meistersinger* we have seen an important action presented by the language of music and the visible events on the stage, almost without the use of words. In the *Nibelungen* the action lies in the inmost soul of a superhuman hero, and so comes to include a whole world within itself. The tragic doom passes on from generation to generation, without the formal unity of the work being in any way disturbed; on the contrary it becomes more and more firmly established as the work proceeds. In *Tristan und Isolde*, in the very first act, the heroes cease to exist for the outside world, so that scarcely anything remains but

the "inmost centre of the world," the hero's own self-consciousness, in which the action continues through the two last acts. Lastly, *Parsifal* resembles *Meistersinger* in engaging the sense of sight, *Tristan* in addressing the understanding, but as both picture and word have reference to the inner heart of the hero, they are purified and illuminated; the impression of the living stage picture, united with the magic power of music reveals the unspoken secrets of the heart, and enables us ourselves to see the world through the eyes of genius.

Such are the depths to which we are led by Wagner's art; such is his conception of action.

Richard Wagner.

Before closing this chapter I should like to summarize the principal result, in so far as it concerns my immediate subject, Richard Wagner.

A calm, unbiassed view of the entire work of Wagner's life cannot fail to lead to the conclusion that in him the German drama has reached the highest point of its development; just as the Greek drama reached its highest point in Sophocles, the Spanish in Calderon, the English in Shakespeare. In saying this I am not placing the Bayreuth Meister *above* the other great German poets and musicians; every great genius stands alone, and comparison is out of place. But in the history of a people there comes a time when everything which constitutes its own peculiar individuality has by degrees attained maturity, and when it is thus enabled to create its own peculiar art. The appropriate expression can however only be achieved, gradually, partly because all kinds of technical problems have first to be solved by experiment (the intense desire of the soul to find expression will of itself lead men to experiment), partly because the historical development of the people must first reach its fullest maturity before it can bear fruit in their own individual art. Before Wagner, the highest art, *i.e.* the dramatic art, had not, in Germany, brought forth any original form of its own, any form sprung from, and fully answering to its own requirements. The spoken drama followed the English and Greek; the lyric drama, so far as it was worthy of serious consideration at all, followed the Italian and French.[1] All the great Germans felt the necessity of a new form, answering to the genius of the German people, and felt the want of it very painfully. Many of them even knew that this German drama could only come to pass by the coalescence of the richest lyric expression with the profoundest depth of thought, *i.e.* by the fusion of tone and word. Very shortly after Wagner's birth we find men like Hoffmann and Weber attacking the problem exactly in

[1] To say that it *followed* them is saying too little, for such geniuses as Handel, Mozart and Gluck actually wrote Italian and French operas which the Germans only know in distorted translations.

the place where success might be hoped for. Everything therefore was prepared; the "German Shakespeare," the "Beethoven of the Stage," had only to appear, and the long-expected drama came into being.

That Richard Wagner's dramas are the culminating point of the development of dramatic art in Germany can therefore scarcely be disputed. It may be asked whether we shall see more Wagners; whether his assertion that it will always be possible to create anew within the form of the word-tone-drama is likely to be justified by the event? Our experience of the past scarcely holds out any such hope. The prospect will be more encouraging if we can only bring ourselves, with Schiller and Wagner, to hope for a new, more artistic confirmation of human

Richard Wagner, 1873.
After a Photograph by A. von Gross.

society; a regeneration out of which the incomparable "universal art" will proceed. It is characteristic of the Germans that their artists have looked for this, and have been unhappy instead of feeling proud of their isolated position; like Wagner's Lohengrin, they always longed from the heights to the depths. Perhaps too the infinite longing "to be understood through love" (iv. 362) may have misled these great Germans into hopes destined to prove as vain as those of Lohengrin. Wagner writes in one of his fragments: "Sufficient to have dreamed, seen, willed it, to have spoken: this might be!— Why long for possession? that will vanish." Besides, Wagner's art-works are in

no way dependent upon his theoretical doctrines and convictions, any more than they are dependent upon his ideas on politics, philosophy, or regeneration. These, like everything theoretic or discursive, have only a relative value; of his art, Schopenhauer's words quoted in the introduction to this chapter are true: "the art of genius is everywhere at its goal." With Richard Wagner's dramatic works we may say that a mighty development, continued through centuries, and embracing poetry as well as music, is at its goal.

Appendix

Catalogue of Richard Wagner's Works

I HAVE, for the sake of clearness, divided the works into three groups: poetical, musical, and dramatic. In some cases, *e.g.* the *Liebesmal der Apostel* and the *Song at Weber's Grave*, and others, in which both the words and the music are by Wagner, it is difficult to decide into which group they ought to be placed; I have included them amongst the musical compositions. Poems which were never published by Wagner himself during his life-time, or in any subsequent collection of his works, have not been mentioned.

Here, as elsewhere, my aim has been simplicity. Only those dates have been mentioned which appeared useful and necessary to give a general view. The names of the places in which the various books were composed have been omitted as irrelevant.

With the exception of a few dates (in the *Fliegender Holländer*, the *Nibelungenring*, and *Parsifal*), my information has been taken, not from the original manuscripts, but from Wagner's letters, and the writings of Herren Glasenapp, Tappert, Kastner (Wagner-catalogue), and Dannreuther.

Poetical Works

Prize Poem on the death of a schoolfellow, November 1825. (Printed at the time, but now lost.)
(*Friedrich der Rotbart*, 1848.)
To his Royal Friend, 1864.
Rheingold (a short poem), 1869.
On the completion of Siegfried, 1869.
Lines on 25th August, 1870.
To the German army before Paris, January 1871.
(*A Capitulation.* Comedy after the antique, 1870-71.)

Musical Works

Sonata, Quartet and Aria, 1829 (? mentioned i. 9).
"*Paukenschlagouverture*," B♭ Major, 1830 (?). Performed in the *Hoftheater* in Leipzig in the winter of 1830.
Sonata for Pianoforte, B♭ Major, 1831. (Published by Breitkopf, 1832.)
Polonaise for Pianoforte, four hands, D Major, 1831. (Published together with the last.)

Fantasia for Pianoforte in F♯ Minor, 1831. (Unpublished.)

Concert Overture, D Minor, composed September 26th, 1831, rewritten November 4th, 1831.—Performed in the Leipzig *Gewandhaus*, February 23rd, 1832.

Beethoven's ninth Symphony, arranged for pianoforte for two hands. 1831.

Concert Overture, C Major with grand fugue, 1831. First performed in 1832 at the Euterpe Concerts, and again on April 30th, 1832, in the *Gewandhaus*.

Seven Compositions for Goethe's Faust, 1832:

1. Soldier's Song.
2. Peasants under the lime tree.
3. Brander's Song.
4. Song of Mephistopheles ("Es war einmal ein König").
5. Song of Mephistopheles ("Was mach'st du mir vor Liebchen's Thür").
6. Gretchen's Song ("Meine Ruh ist hin").
7. Gretchen's Melodrama ("Ach neige du Schmerzensreiche").

Overture to the Tragedy König Enzio, February 3rd, 1832.—Often performed in the Leipzig *Hoftheater* with Raupach's Drama.

Symphony, C Major, March 1832.—Performed in Prague in the summer of 1832; in the Leipzig *Gewandhaus*, January 10th, 1833; in Venice, December 24th, 1882.

Symphony, E Major. Summer of 1834. (Fragment.)

Cantata for the New Year, December 1834.—Performed on New Year's Eve (?) 1834-35 in Magdeburg.

Overture to Apel's play "Columbus," 1835.—Performed in Magdeburg 1835; afterwards in Riga and Paris.

Music to the Pantomime "der Berggeist," 1835. (Authenticity doubtful according to Glasenapp.)—Performed in Magdeburg 1835.

Overture: "Pollonia," 1836.

Overture: "Rule Britannia," end of 1836 or beginning of 1837.—Performed in Königsberg, March 1837.

Romance in G Major. Words by Holtei, August 1837. (For insertion in the *Singspiel*, "Mary, Max, and Michel," by K. Blum).—Performed in Riga, 1837.

Hymn of the People, on Emperor Nicholas ascending the Throne, November 1837.—Performed in Riga on November 21st, 1837.

Der Tannenbaum. Song in the Livonian Key (E♭ Minor), Words by Scheuerlin, 1838.

Les deux Grenadiers. Song; French words by Heine, 1839.

Three Romances, 1839-40:

1. Dors mon Enfant. (Words by Victor Hugo.)
2. Attente. (Words by Victor Hugo.)
3. Mignonne. (Words by Ronsard.)

Les adieux de Maria Stuart. (? This composition is once named by Wagner; nothing further is known about it.)

Faust Overture, 1839-40. Rewritten 1855.

Music for a Vaudeville, by Dumanoir, "La descente de la Courtille," 1840 (? apparently only a Fragment).

Cantata. On the unveiling of the statue of King Friedrich, August 1843.—Performed in Dresden, June 7th, 1843.

Das Liebesmahl der Apostel. Biblical scene for chorus of men's voices and grand orchestra, 1843.—First performance in Dresden on July 6th, 1843 on the occasion of the general festival of the Men's Choral Societies of Saxony.

Greeting of the Faithful. To Friedrich August the beloved; for chorus of men's voices and orchestra, 1844.—Performed in Dresden, August 12th, 1844, on the return of the King of Saxony from England.

Funeral Music on the removal of Carl Maria von Weber's body to German soil; on motives from *Euryanthe*, 1844.—Performed in Dresden, December 14th, 1844.

At Weber's Grave. Song after the funeral, for men's voices. (Words by Wagner) 1844.—Performed December 15th, 1844.

Album Sonata E♭ Major (For Frau Wesendonck), 1853.

Five Poems, 1857-58:

1. Der Engel.
2. Schmerzen.
3. Träume.
4. Stehe Still.
5. Im Treibhaus.

Albumblatt in A♭ Major, "Ankunft bei den schwarzen Schwänen" (for Countess Pourtalès), 1860.

Albumblatt. C Major (for Fürstin Metternich).

Huldigungsmarsch. (Dedicated to King Ludwig II. of Bavaria), 1864.

Siegfried Idyll, 1870.

Kaisermarsch, for grand Orchestra and Chorus, 1871.

Albumblatt, in E♭ Major (for Frau Betty Schott), 1875.

Grand Festival March. In celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the United States, 1876.

He also published editions of the following works:

Palestrina's Stabat Mater. With marks of expression. Beginning of 1848.—Performed March 8th, 1848.

Gluck's Iphigénie en Aulide. Retranslated and arranged, 1846.—First performance, February 22nd, 1847.

Mozart's Don Giovanni. In part retranslated and adapted, 1850.

Pianoforte arrangements and transcriptions of Operas by Donizetti and Halévy for various instruments made by Wagner in Paris for payment cannot be considered works of art.

Dramatic Works

1. Sketches, Fragments, and small Pièces d'Occasion

Tragedies "after the model of the Greeks," about 1825. (Unknown.)

Grand Tragedy, (afterwards set to music,) about 1827 to 1829. (Unknown.)

Pastoral Play, about 1829. (Unknown.)

Scena and Aria (1832?).—Performed in the Leipzig *Hoftheater*, April 22nd, 1832. (See facsimile of the programme, p. 38.)

Die Hochzeit, Opera in three acts.—Poem, in the summer of 1832; composition commenced in December 1832.—At the desire of his sister Rosalie Wagner destroyed the poem and laid the composition aside.

Allegro to the Aria of Aubry in Marschner's *Vampyr*, words and music by Wagner, September 1833.—Written for his brother Albert and often performed in Würzburg.

Die hohe Braut. Grand Opera in five acts.—Poem sketched in 1836 and forwarded to Scribe; not composed.—Afterwards Wagner rewrote the poem and presented it to his friend Kittl as libretto for his opera *Die Franzosen vor Nizza* (performed in Prague, 1848.)

Sacrificial scene and Invocation, intended for insertion in a play (unknown), 1837.—Probably performed at the time in Königsberg.

Die Glückliche Bärenfamilie. Comic Opera in two acts.—Poem written and composition commenced at the beginning of 1838 (fragment).

Die Sarazenin (Manfred). Opera in five acts.—First sketch of the poem 1841; detailed sketch, 1843; never composed, as far as is known.—The detailed sketch of the poem will be found in the Bayreuther Blätter, 1889, pp. 1-28, and in the volume of *Nachgelassene Schriften.*

Friedrich der Rotbart. Drama in five acts (without music), 1848. (How far the plan was actually executed I am unable to say.)

Jesus von Nazareth, 1848.—The detailed sketch will be found in the *Nachgelassene Schriften.*

Wieland der Schmied, 1849.—The detailed sketch is printed in volume iii. of his collected works.

Achilleus, 1849—?—(notes on the sketch will be found in the volume *Nachgelassene Schriften*).

Die Sieger, 1856.—(A short sketch of this drama, the scene of which is laid in India in Buddhist times, will be found in the volume, *Nachgelassene Schriften.*

Eine Kapitulation. Comedy after the Antique, 1870-71.

2. Dramas

Die Feen.—Poem and music, 1833.—Never performed during Wagner's life. Since performed in Munich.

Das Liebesverbot.—Sketched in the summer of 1834; poem completed and composition commenced (?) before the end of the same year; score completed at the beginning of 1836.—First and only performance at Magdeburg, March 29th, 1836.

Rienzi, the last of the Tribunes.—First idea—?—First definite conception in the summer of 1837; detailed sketch in the summer of 1838; composition begun July 26th, 1838; score completed November 19th, 1840.—First performance, Dresden, October 20th, 1842.

Der Fliegende Holländer.—First idea at the beginning of 1838; first sketch in one act, May 1840; poem written from May 18th to May 28th, 1841. (Slight differences from the final text, see p. 263); sketch of the composition finished September 13th, 1841; score—?—first performance Dresden, January 2nd, 1843.

Tannhäuser and the Singer's War in the Wartburg.—First idea 1841; scenic sketch ("*Venusberg,* Romantic opera") and first musical sketches in the summer of 1842; poem completed May 22nd, 1843; score finished April 13th, 1845.—First performance in Dresden, October 19th, 1845.

Lohengrin.—First idea in the summer of 1841 (together with *Tannhäuser*); sketch of the poem in the summer, 1845; score commenced September 9th, 1846, completed August 28th, 1847.—First performance in Weimar, under Liszt, August 28th, 1850.

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg.—First detailed sketch in the summer of 1845 (in poetic connection with *Tannhäuser,* then just finished); poem rewritten as regards essential points in the winter 1861-62; first prose sketch dated "Vienna, November 18th, 1861." Composition begun in the spring of 1862, score completed (after many interruptions) on October 20th, 1867.—First performance, Munich, June 21st, 1868.

Der Ring des Nibelungen.—It is clear from Wagner's letters that the subject occupied him as early as the year 1846; the detailed sketch in prose (entitled "the Nibelungen myth arranged as a drama") was made in the summer of 1848. It corresponds exactly to the present tetralogy, both in extent and in the order of the principal events. The last strokes were added to the score in November 1874.

The work was commenced by setting the final catastrophe into verse, with the title *Siegfried's Tod* (now *Götterdämmerung*). This was commenced on November 12th and finished on November 28th, 1848; it contains the first little musical sketch given on p. 292. Then followed the poem of *der Junge Siegfried* (now *Siegfried*), written in the spring of 1851; of the music only a few sketches date from this time. In the autumn of 1851 Wagner returned to his first and more comprehensive project of 1848 and sketched "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a stage Festival Play for three days and one preliminary evening." The poem of *die Walküre* was completed on July 1st, 1852, that of *das Rheingold* in the beginning of November 1852. *Der Junge Siegfried* was then recast, and the new version finished by the middle of December 1852; *Siegfried's Tod* was also in part rewritten, and in February 1853 fifty copies of the complete poem *Der Ring des Nibelungen* were printed as manuscript for Wagner's friends. This edition corresponds very nearly with the text as we now know it. The first published edition was in 1863 (here the titles *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* are first introduced).—The composition of *Rheingold* was commenced at the end of the autumn 1853; the score finished at the end of May or in the beginning of June 1854; that of *Walküre* was begun in June 1854 and finished in March (?) 1856; that of *Siegfried* begun in the second half of 1856, and laid aside in June 1857 (the score of the first act was finished in the beginning of May in that year; that of the second completed in the detailed pencil sketch when the interruption took place). In 1865 Wagner returned to the composition, and after fresh interruptions finished the sketch of *Siegfried* in 1869, and the score on February 5th, 1871. The composition of *Götterdämmerung* was begun immediately after the sketch of *Siegfried* was finished, in October 1869; the orchestral sketch of the first act was finished on January 11th, 1870; that of the second on July 5th, 1870; and that of the third on February 9th, 1872. The entire score was finished on November 21st, 1874.—The first performance of the whole work took place in Bayreuth on August 13th to 17th, 1876.

Tristan und Isolde.—First mention ("I have conceived a Tristan und Isolde in my head"), December 1854; mentioned again 1856; poem written in the summer of 1857; finished in September; composition of the first act completed on December 31st, 1857 (presumably only in the sketch?), that of the second act in the beginning of 1859, that of the third act in August 1859.—First performance in Munich, June 10th, 1865.

Parsifal.—First idea in 1854 (in connection with *Tristan und Isolde*, where Parsifal was to have appeared in the third act); first sketch of the drama in the spring of 1857; first sketch of the detailed poem 1865; poem completed on 23rd February, 1877. Fragments of the music are said to have been composed in the fifties; composition commenced in the autumn of 1877, completed in the sketch on April 25th, 1879, score completed on January 13th, 1882.—First performance in Bayreuth, July 26th, 1882.

RW

Fourth Chapter

Bayreuth

> In the whole of this wide world I have not one foot of earth upon which I can show myself exactly as I am.
>
> Richard Wagner, 1851.

Printed in Germ

letzte Naturaufnahme 1883 Photogravure

Introduction

"Ein Liebewerk nach eignem Willen
Der Philosoph, der Dichter schuf."
GOETHE.

The heritage.

OUR conception of symbolism has been enlarged and defined by Hebbel, who says: "*Every* action that is important in itself, is symbolical." He is here speaking of action in the sense of the dramatic poet, but the remark is equally true of the actions of life: every great deed is a symbol; especially when it assumes a visible form, peculiarly its own. This is true of Wagner's Bayreuth. The Festival Play-House in Bayreuth is something more than a theatre contrived to fulfil a certain purpose; it is also an embodiment of the longings, the untiring efforts and battles of a whole life. Just as Wagner's personality appeared in each of his gestures, attaining, if I may use the expression, "monumental" form in his mighty head, so is the outcome of the entire activity of his life centred in the idea *Bayreuth*, the visible symbol of which is the play-house. Here, too, as with every symbol, the circles drawn round the central point may be wide or they may be narrow. In the narrowest sense the house is a *Nibelungen* Theatre; ever since the beginning of the fifties the idea of erecting a special building for the performance of his *Ring des Nibelungen* was in Wagner's mind, and in Bayreuth it was at last realized. In a somewhat wider sense it is a stage on which Wagner's works can be represented in a way conformable to his intentions,

as they can not be on the ordinary operatic and theatrical stages. Only through perfectly correct performances, such as those in Bayreuth, can the world learn that we have here to do, not with "extremely complicated operas," but with a new species of drama. Wagner's art consists of something more than a number of masterworks; it is a new realm, to be exploited by future generations, a realm in which it will be possible "eternally to invent anew." With the opening out of this new domain the higher art, the drama, is reinstated in its old dignity, from which it had sadly fallen away in the opera, while in the spoken drama it had sunk into mere literature and dilettantism. We see how the circles become larger. If the reader will recall what I said in my second chapter regarding Wagner's idea of the dignity of art, he will see that we have by no means reached the furthest point as yet. The idea of Bayreuth serving merely for the performance of his own works, or for bringing a new form of the drama into life, was very far from Wagner's mind; he was aiming at something beyond his own person and the life of his most genial creations; what he wanted was that art should become a determining, constructive factor in the life of the human race; should be our guide "when the statesman despairs, when the politician is helpless, and the socialist torments himself with fruitless systems," should proclaim what the philosopher can but faintly indicate. Art alone, he thinks, can save religion, threatened as it is at the present day from every side, because art alone leads "by ideal representation of the allegorical picture, to the comprehension of its inner essence, the divine, unspeakable truth"; art alone can, as Schiller said, "turn the world in the direction of good"; its forms "lead us to desire what is necessary and eternal." Is it possible that the great German poets, and especially the founder of Bayreuth, were deceived? Was their thought after all but "a lovely dream of eve," like that of Hans Sachs? Or was Wagner right when he exclaimed prophetically: "there comes a day when the heritage shall be opened out to the human brotherhood of the whole world" (iv. 282)? No matter; at least his Bayreuth was a first impulse, a deed intended to lead men on to realize his high conception of the destiny of art. "The artist is able," he writes, "to foresee a world yet unformed; by the force of his longing to enjoy what has not yet come into being." But it is characteristic of Richard Wagner that he could not rest satisfied with himself realizing and enjoying, he could not create except for others. Up to his death, which overtook him whilst he was writing, he never conceived that he had fulfilled his duty to the world, or to the art which he deemed holy. He is not only an artist, not only a thinker, but in the fullest sense of the word a *reformer*. Even in the fifties he acknowledges his highest aim to be "to show men the way to their salvation" (R., 31). He desires above all things the moral well-being of his people and the human race; he does not wish to increase enjoyment, but to ennoble. "Let the older man not think of himself, but only of the younger, and of the heritage which he lays into his heart"; this was said by the man who built Bayreuth. And this is why Bayreuth is, for us, not only the place where Wagner's works are performed,

but also the symbol of the abundant heritage which Wagner has laid in our hearts.

I am justified therefore in devoting a special chapter to Bayreuth. It will be a short one, since neither the festival plays, nor what has been called "the Bayreuth idea" are suitable subjects for description. Such things must be experienced.

The Festival Play-house at Bayreuth. Photograph by Anna Chamberlain.

The Festival Plays

"What you have boldly wished, see now achieved!
Impossible 'tis—therefore to be believed."
Faust (Translated by TAYLOR).

1838. VERY different accounts of the origin of the festival-plays are given in the various books on Wagner. It is impossible to fix the precise moment at which the idea first occurred to him, nor indeed is it necessary; from the very first we find Wagner striving to attain performances as nearly perfect as possible,—*festival* performances, therefore, in the true sense. In my first chapter I quoted a letter of the theatrical director at Riga, complaining of the way in which he and his staff were worried by Wagner in his endeavours to attain perfection. That was in 1838, when Wagner was twenty-five. It is obvious that performers cannot *always* be kept working at such high pressure, least of all when musical works have to be given requiring many different elements to work together with exactness and enthusiasm. Again and again Wagner calls upon the theatres to limit the *number* of their performances, and to aim rather at excellence of quality; a bad performance he declares to be an offence against art, and ruinous to the public taste. These thoughts are to be found expressed very fully, and accompanied by detailed suggestions of a practical nature, in Wagner's *Sketch for the organization of a German National Theatre* drawn up in 1848.[1] Wagner

[1] Fifteen years later Wagner proved in his essay on the *Vienna Court Opera* that excellent results might be attained, with the retention of the ballet, and of a special company for Italian operas. I have collected and discussed Wagner's most important utterances on this point in my Essay On the inauguration of the school for the formation of technical style in Bayreuth, in the *Freie Bühne* (now the *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*), 1893, p. 188 *et seq.*

never loses sight of the "almighty coöperation of the public"; he knows that artistic performances must not be forced upon it, that the task must be, as Schiller says, to offer the eternal, and the eternally beautiful, in such form to the world "that they become an object of its desire." In 1847, the year of the composition of *Lohengrin*, he writes: "the public must be educated by facts accomplished; until it has learned to know the good, and become accustomed thereto, no true desire for what is good can be awakened."[1] And in 1850 he replies to the request of the Weimar *Intendant* that he will sanction cuts in *Lohengrin* with a view to making it easier (!) for the public: "If you wish really to educate your public, you must above all things educate it to strength; drive out all the cowardice and indolence from its Philistine body, and bring it to seek, not diversion, but concentration of thought in the theatre. Unless you can educate the public to exercise strength in its enjoyment of art, your friendly zeal will help neither my works nor my intentions. The Athenians sat from noon till night at the performances of their trilogies, and they were certainly men; true, they themselves coöperated actively in their own enjoyment." In *Oper und Drama* he writes: "Our theatrical public has no desire for art; it seeks diversion in the theatre, not concentration, and diversion is attained by artificially stringing together detached details, not by adhering to the principle of unity, which is art" (iv. 279). The object therefore is, not to give good performances every now and then, but to educate the public to desire what is good, to exclaim unanimously with Wagner, "rather no theatre than a bad one."[2]

This conception of the mission of the theatre, these views with regard to 1851.
the practical means required to raise it to its true dignity, form the soil on which the idea of the "festival plays" afterwards grew up. It has a direct connection with his *Ring des Nibelungen*. When he commenced the composition of this work, and enlarged it to a gigantic tetralogy, he soon realized that he must not count upon its being performed in ordinary theatres. Whilst nothing more than its grand outline was in his head he wrote to Uhlig (November 12th, 1851): "With this new conception of mine I have given up all connection with the theatre and the public of the present day: I have definitely and for ever broken with the forms of the present." He could scarcely at that time have foreseen that thirty years later the theatres would greedily seize upon his work and make their profit out of it, after cutting it down and making it fit into the ordinary repertoire; he would scarcely have felt encouraged at such a prospect. This work—like the others of his second epoch—was from the very first something hallowed, sacred; it was not intended to share the fate of the earlier ones, to be sent to beg for him. He wrote to Liszt: "I hope never, even in thought, to sully the *Nibelungen* with the stain of Jewish finance; I should wish to preserve its purity in this respect" (L., i. 291). This is why he intended that it should

[1] Letter of August 31st, 1847 (given by Tappert in his *Richard Wagner*, p. 83).

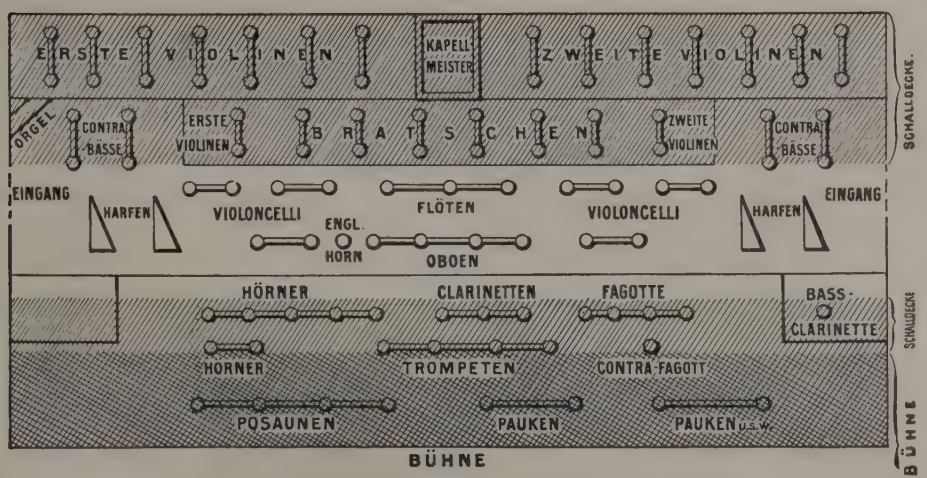
[2] Concluding words of a speech delivered in St Gallen, 1856 (*Allg. Musik Zeitung*, 1886, p. 444).

only be given at special festivals. In a letter to Fischer in 1855 he writes: "I have not the slightest thought of any theatre now in existence; with such I will have nothing more to do, for a work like my new one cannot be given between, say *Martha* and *Le Prophète*." The expenses of the festival, he continues, would have to be met in some way; neither the author nor his fellow-workers were to derive any pecuniary profit from it, and all true lovers of art were to have free entry. Wagner expresses himself very clearly regarding this first idea of the festival plays in a letter to Uhlig: "Could I but have ten thousand thalers at my disposal, this is what I should do with it: here in Zurich, where I happen to be, and where some of the conditions are not altogether unfavourable, I would erect a rough theatre of boards and beams in a beautiful meadow near the town. It should be built according to my own plans, and provided with the necessary scenery and machinery for the performance of *Siegfried*. I would pick out the most suitable singers that could be found, and invite them to Zurich for six weeks. . . . In the same way too I would invite the orchestra. From the beginning of the year invitations would appear in all the German papers to lovers of the musical drama to come to the festival. Every one who sent in his name, and made the journey to Zurich for the purpose, should be sure of obtaining admission; of course all admission would be free. The young people of Zurich, the university, the choral societies etc., would also be invited. When all was ready I would give three performances of *Siegfried* in one week; *after the third the theatre would be pulled down, and my score burned.* To those who were pleased with it, I would say: there, go and do likewise! And if they wanted anything new from me I would say: provide the money!—Now, do you think me perfectly mad? Perhaps I am, but I assure you that to attain this is the object of my life, it is the only inducement which I have to compose a work" (U., 60). That is the idea of the festival plays in its purity, as it was conceived by the mind of genius, before the contact with reality, and the thousand compromises which it involved, compelled him to modify his ideas and make them more fitted for life.

The first public mention which Wagner makes of his plan is in his *Mittheilung an meine Freunde* (published in December 1851). "I hope some day to perform the three dramas and their Prelude in a festival for three days and one preliminary evening, arranged for the purpose. I shall consider my object fully gained if I and my fellow-workers, the actual performers, succeed in communicating my intention to the artistic feeling—(not the critical faculty!)—of those assembled. Any further results are unnecessary, and I am indifferent to them" (iv. 417). It is evident that the idea was a part of Wagner's life, and gained more and more definite form in this projected performance of the *Nibelungenring*. The fundamental principles: the building of a festival house specially for the purpose; the arrangement of a festival, carefully prepared beforehand in every detail, the absolute exclusion of the element of finance, were present in his mind from the very first, and remained the same until the

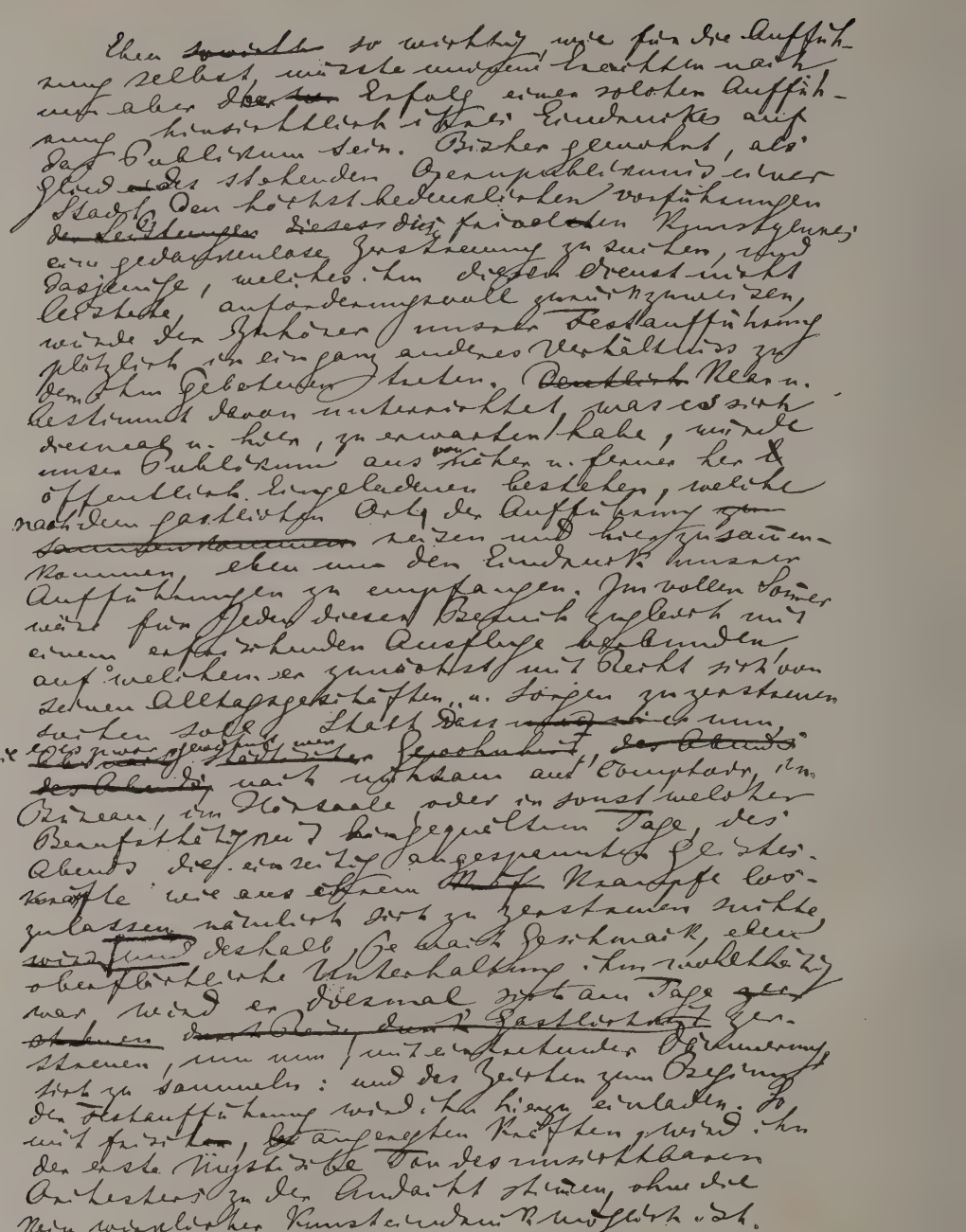
house was built. Even some of the details of his project, for instance that of selecting a small town as more suitable than a large one for his festival, were part of the original conception. "Large towns and their public have ceased to exist for me now," he wrote on January 30th, 1852, to Liszt, "I can only imagine my audience as an assembly of my friends, come together to make acquaintance with my work, if possible in some beautiful and secluded place, far from all the town civilization, with its smoke and odour of trade: such a spot might be Weimar; certainly not any larger town."

At last, in 1862, when Wagner found himself compelled to sanction an edition of the poem of the *Nibelungen* by itself, he wrote a preface thereto, in which the idea of his festival plays assumed more definite form. The whole question is thoroughly discussed in ten pages, and as my object is, not to save my readers the trouble of study, but to urge them to read Wagner's works for themselves, I must refer them to this concise and exhaustive treatise, which will be found at the end of the sixth volume of his collected writings. The reason why it would be impossible to represent dramatic works like Wagner's in the existing theatres lies, as he points out, "in the utter want of technical finish in the German Opera, and the almost grotesque incorrectness of the performances." The festivals could not fail to exert a most beneficial influence upon the executive artists themselves, as they would be able to concentrate all their strength on acquiring perfect mastery of a single work; on the public the impression would be very great, as people would not come tired with the day's work to find recrea- 1862.



Plan of the Bayreuth Orchestra at a Performance of *Parsifal*.

tion in the theatre; they would enjoy their recreation during the day, and when the evening twilight set in, would go to the theatre to collect their thoughts. All this is stated in a very convincing way, and Wagner's prophecy: "it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of stage-festival plays carried out in

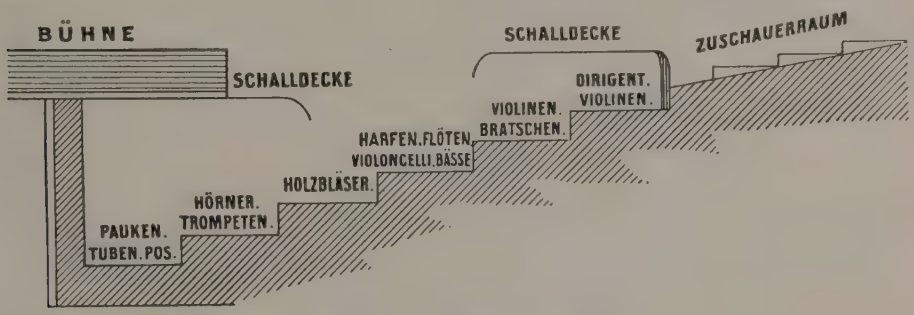


Facsimile of a Passage in the Original MS. (Coll. Works, vi. pp. 388-89).[1]

[1] Equally important, in my opinion, would be the impression which the performance made upon the public. The opera-going public of our towns has hitherto been accustomed to seek recreation in inferior performances of works of the very questionable form of art known as the opera; whatever will

the way that I have described" has now been fully justified by experience. He soon learned, however, to see that his first idea of a single festival would be of very little use for art. In 1853 he wrote to Roeckel: "I would like to perform all my works in a suitable theatre in the course of one year" (R., 17); in 1862 he contemplates the festivals as a permanent institution, to be repeated every year, or every two or three years. The invisible orchestra is also referred to in this preface as desirable on acoustic, æsthetic, and dramatic grounds.

The public are inclined to attach far too much importance to the disposition of the orchestra at Bayreuth. Many think that the festival play-house is much like other theatres, only with the orchestra laid below and covered in. Wagner's solution of this problem, which has always been admitted by artists of the highest rank to be a stroke of genius, is but one detail, and although it undoubtedly contributes to enhance our confidence in Wagner's abilities, it is of secondary importance. The Florentines of the seventeenth century placed the orchestra behind the scenes.[1] Gretry, in his proposals for a new theatre, describes the



Section of the Bayreuth Orchestra.

Bayreuth house almost exactly. Amongst other things he writes: "the orchestra must be covered in; neither the musicians nor the candles on their desks should be visible to the public." Goethe too wished the orchestra to be concealed as far as possible.[2] This was at last effected by Wagner. He not only covered

not serve for this is haughtily rejected. With our festival performances the public would occupy quite a different position. They would come to the place as guests, by public invitation, merely to receive the impression of the performance, and would be told beforehand exactly what they had to expect. The visit would be in the summer, and would be a pleasure-trip, its object being in the first instance to divert the visitor's mind from the cares of his daily business. Instead of spending his day in the labours of the counting-house, or the office, or the study, or whatever his occupation may be, straining and cramping his mental powers unnaturally in one direction, and seeking the relaxation which he finds necessary in the evening in any superficial entertainment suitable to his taste, he will enjoy his recreation during the day, and, when the evening twilight sets in and the signal for the performance is given, go to the theatre to collect his thoughts. And so, while his vigour is fresh and responsive, the first mystic sounds of the orchestra will tune his mind to that devotional mood, without which no artistic impression is possible.

[1] Ambros. *Gesch. der Musik*, 2nd edition, iv. p. 272.

[2] *Cf.* the very complete and technically instructive essay by C. Kipke, entitled "the invisible orchestra," in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1889, p. 324.

in the orchestra, and brought the stage-picture nearer to the spectator, as his predecessors had required should be done, but, by placing the instruments upon steps, at different elevations, he effected a balance between the different groups; the strings for instance he put at the top; the rougher brass trombones and tubas, right below, under the stage; the wood-wind at the opening between the resonating roofs. This arrangement produced a fusion of the whole body of sound, and a purity of colour such as had never been heard before, and is, as I have already said, an admirable creation of genius; but compared with the *idea* which produced the festival plays it is a mere material adjunct, and therefore of secondary importance.

1865. The preface concludes with the despondent admission that Wagner could now no longer hope to gain his wish with the aid of the lovers of art amongst his friends: "when I consider," he says, "how mean the Germans generally are in such matters, I have no courage to hope for any result from an appeal of this kind." But he yet feels hope in a German Prince, and the preface closes with the question: "Will such a prince ever be found?—In the beginning was the deed!"

The prince was found, as the reader knows:

> ". . . un poète, un soldat, le seul Roi
> De ce siècle, où les rois se font si peu de chose!" (Verlaine.)

Regarding this incident in his life, Wagner writes: "No poetic diction, were it a whole dictionary of poetry, could find suitable expression for the beauty of the event which took place in my life at the command of a lofty-minded King. It was a King who called to me amidst the chaos: Come hither! complete your work; I will it!" But that same public which refused to help Wagner to realize his own beautiful and selfless thought was powerful enough to thwart the will of this "only King of our century," and to prevent the inauguration of the festival-plays in 1865. One glorious festival indeed took place in Munich, when *Tristan und Isolde* was four times performed with Bülow, Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Frau Schnorr, and Mitterwurzer. These performances in May and June 1865 may fairly be called the first festival plays; then he had again to retire, this time into voluntary exile.

It is really amusing to observe the endeavours that are being made by people belonging to theatrical circles in Munich at the present day to revive the old project, and build the festival play-house from Semper's designs[1] *as a profitable financial speculation!* And so the object of the festival idea was to fill the pockets of shareholders! Are men quite incapable of seeing that an art-festival in Wagner's sense rests upon a *moral* foundation, and that its first principle is that there shall be no thought of pecuniary profit.[2] The performances in Bayreuth have never been for pecuniary gain. It is true that

[1] See p. 84.

[2] See "The Work and Mission of my Life," by Richard Wagner, Chap. iv.

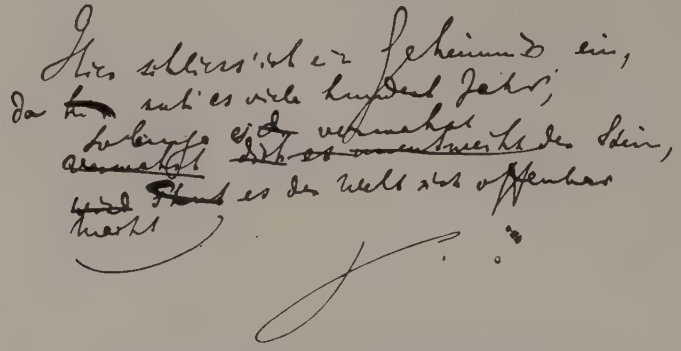
Wagner, after having fought against it for thirty years, had at last to admit the principle of payment for admission, by allowing the tickets to be sold, and it was only by this rather questionable concession that the festivals became possible. From that time onwards the business managers have worked in a way not only selfless, but self-sacrificing, to maintain a balance between receipts and expenditure, and so to ensure the continuation of the festivals; those who have once looked through the budget of a Bayreuth festival will scarcely be surprised that in spite of all their efforts, many a gaping deficit appeared at the end. I have no intention of satisfying the reader's curiosity by telling who it was that met these deficits, and saved the fund. One remark only I have to make: The idea of imitating Bayreuth, and instituting festival plays in other places, is by no means a bad one; but neither a concealed orchestra nor the most excellent stage-management will do it alone; it must begin there, where alone success may be achieved, in absolute selflessness.

In my account of Wagner's life in the first chapter I told how he was 1870.
encouraged to revive the idea of his festival plays by the German victories of 1870; henceforward he placed his trust, not only in the German *genius*, but in the German *people*, and I also said that his hopes were in the main disappointed. The circumstances which led to the choice of Bayreuth, the building of the house and all its arrangements, with the various stages of its progress, down to the first festival in 1876, and the disposal of the deficit which it left behind, are related by Wagner himself in the ninth volume of his collected writings; in his *Schlussbericht bis zur Begründung von Wagner-Vereinen* (Final report, up to the founding of the Wagner Societies), and in the essay: *Das Bühnenfestspielhaus zu Bayreuth, nebst einem Bericht über die Grundsteinlegung desselben* (The Festival Play House in Bayreuth, with an Account of the laying of the Foundation-stone). Further details will be found in the *Bayreuther Blätter* of 1886, amongst the letters and documents from the years 1871-76, and in the very valuable pamphlet of Karl Heckel entitled *Die Bühnenfestspiele in Bayreuth; Authentischer Beitrag zur Geschichte ihrer Entstehung und Entwickelung* (The stage-festival-plays in Bayreuth; Contributions to the history of its Origin and Progress. Fritzsch, 1891).[1] In the tenth volume of Wagner's works will be found a *Rückblick auf die Bühnenfestspiele des Jahres*, 1876 (Retrospect of the Festival of 1876), the documents relating to the Second *Patronat*, and lastly Wagner's essay: *Das Bühnenweihfestspiel in Bayreuth*, 1882. Whilst on this subject, I may also mention that even in the earlier edition of his Biography Herr Glasenapp has given a very full account of the festivals, so that his new enlarged edition is sure to contain all that can possibly be wanted. My present work not being intended as a record of events, there is little more for me to relate.

The foundation-stone was laid on May 22nd, 1872. Artists had come 1872.

[1] Many details in the following account are taken from this last-named work.

together in hundreds to Bayreuth from every part of Germany. Inside the stone he laid the following verse:



Facsimile of a Verse laid in the Foundation-stone.[1]

In his festival speech he says among other things: "If I have confidence in myself successfully to carry through the art-work which I intend, I draw my courage from a hope, which itself has grown out of despair. My trust is in the German genius, and I hope for its manifestation in regions of our lives, such as that of our public art, where it has hitherto appeared only in a morbid and distorted form. Above all I trust in the genius of the German music, because I know how gladly, and how brightly it shines in our musicians, when awakened in them by a German master; and I trust in our dramatic actors and singers, because I know that they can be led to new life by a German master, and will leave the vain allurements of a degraded, pleasure-seeking art, to pass to the true fulfilment of their own high vocation. Yes, I put my trust in our artists, and may well do so on the day when such a gathering of the best is assembled round me from the most various parts of our Fatherland, in response to my friendly call. When these artists, in self-forgetful joy in art, cause our great Beethoven's wonder-symphony to sound forth as a festive greeting to you all, then we may say to each other that the work begun to-day is no illusory vision, that on us artists devolves the duty of proving the reality of the idea which it contains." In the further course of his speech Wagner rejected the term "National Theatre" for his Bayreuth House: "Where is the nation which has built this theatre? . . . you yourselves, the lovers of my own special art, of my own peculiar endeavours, have been the only ones to whom I could turn for active sympathy with my plans. . . . And it is in this almost personal relation between us that I have sought the soil for the stone which is to carry the lofty edifice of our highest German aspirations. For the present it is provisional, but only in the sense in which all the external forms of the German nation have for centuries been provisional. The essence of the German genius is that it builds from within;

[1] Here I enclose a secret; there let it rest many hundred years; as long as the stone preserves it, it will reveal itself to the world.

PATRONAT-SCHEIN

Nro. 90

Der Inhaber dieses Scheines

Richard Wagner von Mannheim

hat durch die hiemit quittirte Einzahlung von **300 Thalern** die Rechte eines Patrones der in

Bayreuth

zu bewerkstelligenden drei vollständigen Aufführungen des Bühnenfestspieles

„DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN"

erworben, als welche Rechte ihm die unbedingte Verfügung über einen bequemen Sitzplatz für jeden der zwölf Abende, in denen die dreimalige Aufführung des viertheiligen Werkes bestehen wird, sowie ferner die Betheiligung an der Bildung einer Patronat-Commission zuerkannt sind, welcher die Verfügung über 500 Freiplätze für jede der durch die Beisteuer der Patrone ermöglichten Festaufführungen zustehen soll, und in welcher der Inhaber dieses Scheines sich für eine Patronatstimme durch Delegirung vertreten lassen wird.

BAYREUTH.

1 Februar 1872. Richard Wagner

Als Bevollmächtigte und Verwalter:

Feustel Schmidt Strecker

Printed in Germany.

the eternal God dwells therein before the temple is built to his honour." And he closes with the words: "May this stone be consecrated by the spirit which led you to respond to my call, which gave you courage fully to trust me and to defy the scorn of the world; which speaks through me to you, and is able to do so because it will find itself again in your own hearts; it is the German spirit calling joyfully to us from the centuries of the past." In the evening there was a performance of Beethoven's "wonder-symphony," such as will never be heard again, in the old Opera house of the Margraves; the greatest *virtuosi* of Germany were in the orchestra, Wilhelmj at their head; the solo parts were sung by Niemann, Betz, Johanna Jachmann-Wagner and Marie Lehmann; the chorus was made up of the three best in the Empire, those of Riedel, Stern and Rebling; the great *Meister* of Germany wielded the bâton. Under these auspices the foundation stone of the festival play-house was laid.

From the first the greatest obstacle in the way of the theatre and the 1873.
festival plays was Wagner's determination only to admit those friends who had coöperated with him in bringing them into life; from this nothing could move him. Before the arrangements with Bayreuth were finally completed Wagner wrote to a friend resident there: "The first thing to be borne in mind is that this is not a theatrical speculation to make money; only those invited and the *Patronen* will be admitted; there will be no admission on payment." These *Patronen*, these coöperating friends, had to be found; one thousand individuals (or societies) were necessary, and each would bind himself to subscribe three hundred thalers,[1] not all at once, but in the course of some years. After two years had elapsed, only two hundred and forty *Patronatscheine* (certificates of membership) had been issued—less than a quarter therefore—and what exertions had it cost to find these! The Khedive of Egypt, who subscribed ten thousand marks, was by far the most liberal supporter of the German festival plays! One incident may be mentioned to show the extent of the indifference with which Wagner's work—glorious as it has since proved to the German name—had to contend throughout the Empire. Dr A. Stern was commissioned by the Wagner societies to draw up a "Report and Appeal for Aid" at the end of 1873; four thousand copies of this were distributed to various booksellers and musical dealers, with forms for subscription. Not one of the four thousand took the slightest notice of the document! In Gottingen alone some students entered their names for a few thalers.[2] At the same time the Wagner societies wrote to eighty-one theatres, asking them to give performances for the benefit of the Bayreuth undertaking. This was certainly not an unreasonable request, considering the enormous profits which the theatres had made through Wagner's works, and seeing that most of them had settled matters with the composer by a single payment of twenty or thirty Louis d'ors, without any royalty whatever on the performances! Of the theatres written to, seventy-

[1] £45 in English money.

[2] It is a pity that the names of these worthy students have not been remembered.

eight never replied at all, three answered with a refusal. Let it not be supposed that the reason why the experts refused to have anything to do with the *Nibelungen* was that they considered it incapable of life. Nothing of the kind! A company calling itself "Wagneriana" was formed in Berlin in 1873, and offered him a million thalers (?)[1] to have his festival plays in Berlin. Two hundred and twenty thousand thalers (more than twice the sum which had been obtained for Bayreuth with great labour in two years) were subscribed so quickly that there could be no doubt about the project being successful if only Wagner could have been prevailed upon to depart from his course of pure, disinterested art. Similarly tempting offers came from London and Chicago. The absolute ideality of his Germanism is shown by a letter written in that winter of 1873, that winter so hopeless, and yet so "rich in millions," if he had only chosen to accept what was offered. He writes: "my object is to arouse the dormant powers of the Germans; this is almost more important than the success of my under-
1874. taking in itself." In January 1874 Wagner had formally and finally to declare that his undertaking was at an end. Fortunately some of his friends succeeded in dissuading him from publicly announcing the state of affairs, and soon there came aid from the only quarter from which Wagner had ever received adequate support. On the day of laying the foundation-stone King Ludwig II. had telegraphed to the German poet-composer Richard Wagner: "From the depths of my soul, I send you, dearest friend, my warmest and most sincere good wishes on this day, so full of import for all Germany. Success and prosperity to the great undertaking of next year! To-day I am more than ever united with you in spirit." To prevent the stoppage of the works the King sanctioned an advance from his private purse. It must be observed, however, that both this time and afterwards, when the deficit was met by the King, the funds were supplied merely as an advance on credit; the advance was secured and covered by the surrender of Wagner's *tantièmes* at the Munich *Hoftheater*, so that the festival-house was in reality built by Wagner himself, and by no one else. It was with the gravest misgivings that Wagner decided to have the performances in 1876. "Our anxiety is great," he writes on February 4th, "my determination to allow the performances to take place this year seems like madness to myself. The number of *Patronate* has reached four hundred; according to the latest calculations we require thirteen hundred to get through. The original project has therefore failed completely." And yet so great was the interest awakened throughout Germany, and far beyond, at the last moment by the undertaking, so unprecedented was the artistic success, that there would have been no deficit. *The deficit was the work of the press*, which, as Herr Karl Heckel says, did all that fanaticism and malice could do to ruin Bayreuth.

Here I must pause for a moment in my narrative to name at least a few of those whose ceaseless efforts to help on the cause of the festivals deserve

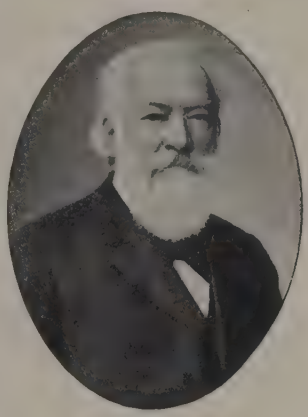
[1] It would seem from the context that thalers (one thaler = three shillings in English money) are meant, but the passage in Wagner's letter is not quite clear.

recognition, though their numbers were too few to accomplish anything decisive.

Muncker and Feustel.

The first name to be mentioned is that of Dr von Muncker, the *Bürgermeister* of Bayreuth, whose services on behalf of the festivals, from the time of Wagner's first visit to Bayreuth in 1871 to the present day, have been simply inestimable.

Dr von Muncker.



Friedrich Feustel.

Without his careful forethought, his tact, his firmness of purpose and his uncompromising devotion to the cause, the undertaking could never have succeeded. The task fell to him—and it was no easy one—of defending Wagner's work with the citizens of Bayreuth and their representatives on the municipal board, who were not always particularly well disposed to him. Still more important in some respects was the influence of the Bayreuth banker, Friedrich Feustel. In this gentleman (afterwards member of the *Reichstag*) Wagner gained one of the most able supporters of his undertaking. The efforts of such men are difficult to describe or to realize; what may be read in the records is insignificant compared to the daily and hourly services which they rendered, from the first meeting to find a suitable site for building, down to the thousand and one worries of the festivals themselves, and the difficult task of managing the finances in the unsatisfactory state they were in. This was all silent work, performed without reward, without glory, without acknowledgment—except from Wagner himself, who never ceased to express his gratitude, and who describes the aid of the festival committee (Muncker, Feustel, and Käfferlein, a lawyer) in a public letter as the only thing which made success possible.

Adolf von Gross.

Adolf von Gross.

I have mentioned the names of these gentlemen first because their services were not public. One more must be added: that of Herr Adolf von Gross. He had already made himself very useful before he was invited to serve on the managing committee; since his appointment (which, if I am not mistaken, took place after the festival of 1876) he has gradually become

sole manager. Those who realize what the crisis was in Bayreuth when Wagner died, who know what it meant to pilot the festival plays safely through the years from 1883 to 1889, will not fail to admire the man through whose agency the task was successfully achieved. It was Wagner's wife who preserved his artistic heritage from destruction, and who eventually carried it on to a glorious victory, but it must never be forgotten that her work would have been impossible, had there not lived a man who united the rarest abilities in himself, and seemed chosen by Providence for this special duty. He devoted his whole life, his energies and every breath to Richard Wagner's idea. I have remarked that the Bayreuth festival plays rest upon a moral foundation; we may say without exaggeration that the moral foundation is embodied in the shrewd, strong, truly German personality of this Kurwenal.

Gräfin Wolkenstein.

Gräfin von Wolkenstein-Trostburg.

I will now speak of the other devoted friends of Wagner's first years in Bayreuth, and, following Wagner's own example, mention three names which should be familiar to every one of his admirers: Freifrau Marie von Schleinitz, Karl Tausig, and Emil Heckel.

I do not know whether it is right to call Gräfin Wolkenstein[1] a *patroness* of the *Meister*, as is sometimes done; I should prefer to call her his fellow-worker in Bayreuth. She was not the woman to use her high social position to *patronize* a man like Wagner. König Ludwig had set the example, and she in a literal sense *served* his genius; unremittingly she worked for him, and did battle undismayed for his cause. Now-a-days we can scarcely realize what it meant to hold Wagner's banner aloft in the years from 1871 to 1876. Had a dozen men shown the courage and strength of conviction displayed by this one woman, the Bayreuth festivals would have been inaugurated under very different auspices. In dedicating his account of the Bayreuth festival play-house to Gräfin Wolkenstein, Wagner says: "I do it because I wish to proclaim the name of the living sympathizer, to whose untiring zeal and help my great undertaking almost

[1] Freifrau von Schleinitz, then the wife of the well-known *Hausminister* of the Emperor William I., Freiherr, afterwards Graf Schleinitz, was married after the death of her first husband to the Austrian ambassador, Graf von Wolkenstein-Trostburg.

exclusively owes its being, it is a name which will always be spoken with profound reverence by me and by every true lover of my art." And several years later, when he was able to survey the events of these stirring years with all their hopes and their cares, he spoke of his generous friend as "the principal force whose restless activity alone provided the means for my undertaking." He continues: "I must admit that without the help of this lady, in the high social position which she enjoyed, and honoured as she was in every circle, without her efforts, continued for years and years with unflagging energy, it would have been impossible to obtain the means for meeting the most necessary expenses, or to inaugurate the festivals. Untired and undaunted, she braved the incredulous smiles, and at last the open ridicule of our educated publicists, etc. . . ." (Retrospect of the Stage Festival Plays of 1876, x. 144). The only thing which I need add regarding this rare woman is that her friendship remained true after his death.

Karl Tausig.

Of Karl Tausig there is unfortunately very little to relate, as he died on July 17th, 1871. He had been a faithful and devoted supporter of Wagner ever since the fifties. When the Bayreuth idea assumed definite form he regarded it, to quote Wagner, "as a matter personally concerning himself." The first organization was entirely the work of Tausig, and had he not died in the very first year, there is no saying what his enormous personal energy and practical ability might not have achieved. Artistically the loss was irreparable. What Schnorr was amongst the singers, Tausig was among the executive artists of that time—a genius; indeed, it may fairly be said, that with the exception of Bülow, Tausig was the only one who possessed genius. When he died he was just engaged in organizing an orchestra, to be trained by himself, to form the nucleus of the orchestra at Bayreuth. Fate was against Wagner; two men of extraordinary capacity, Schnorr and Tausig, died directly he had found them. In each case "the great block of granite had to be replaced by bricks."[1]

Emil Heckel.

Emil Heckel.

The third name is that of a simple German, one who may in a certain sense be regarded as a type—though we might wish that many more would take the type as their model. Emil Heckel is the founder of the first Richard Wagner society, that of Mannheim. The impulse given by him called forth numerous similar societies in other towns, both in Germany and abroad, and it was not *his* fault that the practical results of these societies remained out of all proportion to what was needed; his untiring zeal was met everywhere with cold indifference. Of course he was ridiculed by the press—and the German burgher slumbered

[1] See p. 91. Tausig's portrait will be found on p. 278.

contentedly on. We need not however be blind to what really was done by the Wagner societies; though they did not dispose the people to generosity, at least they awakened an intelligent interest in Wagner's work. Heckel himself certainly deserves to be regarded as an actual fellow-worker; this is testified to by Wagner's own letters, where he is called "a specially active friend" (ix. 386). His true greatness lies particularly in the fact that he redeemed the honour of the German middle classes; for this reason his name will always be remembered in the history of the Bayreuth festivals.

Richard Wagner at the Rehearsal.
Sketch by Adolph Menzel.

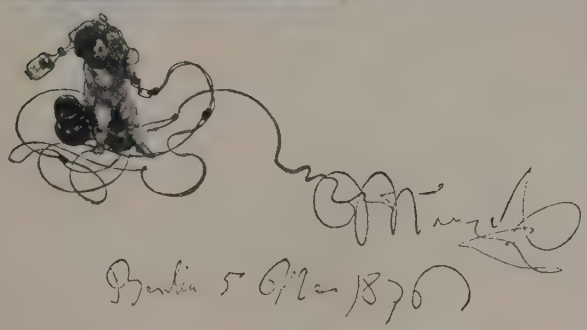
It is not my object to give a list of names; I must therefore pass over many which are well worthy of mention. Only one thing I have to repeat: everyone who shared in the work in Bayreuth was expected to efface himself, and devote his time, his powers and his means to the end in view; Wagner wrote in November 1875: "no one is to derive the smallest profit from the undertaking; all that most of us have to look for is labour and sacrifice." Honour to *all* those who justified Wagner's trust in the German genius! Let us now return to the festival plays of 1876.

1875. Preliminary rehearsals were held from July 1st to August 12th, 1875. On August the 1st of that year the orchestra was heard for the first time from the "mystic abyss." In 1876 every artist who joined had to bind himself for three full months. The rehearsals began on June 1st and continued until August 9th; the three public performances of the cycle were held from the 13th to the 30th of August. The days of the rehearsals were always the pleasantest in Bayreuth, for then Wagner had only those around him whose heart was in the undertaking, and who had been initiated into the glories of the mighty work by careful study and daily instruction from its great author; these were the executive artists and the few real and immediate supporters of the work. Even in the preliminary rehearsals of 1875, when the scenery was only partly ready, and

1876.

many of the arrangements of the house still incomplete, the enthusiasm was indescribable. In 1876 it grew with every rehearsal, and the full rehearsal from the 6th to the 9th of August may be regarded as the "festival performance" proper. Glasenapp writes: "wherever one turned, one saw enchanted people, all living in the same magic world of ideality." The presence of King Ludwig II., the "fellow-creator of Bayreuth,"[1] as Wagner called him, was the crowning event of the occasion. The King very rightly returned on the evening of the 9th to Hohenschwangau. On August 13th began the first "stage-festival-play," now unfortunately no longer, as Wagner had always wished it to be, "amongst ourselves," that is amongst those who were in earnest about German art, his "fellow-creators," who were able and willing to receive the gift as it was offered to them by that chosen array of German artists, with the great German *Meister* at their head. It was not admiration for his own work which Wagner was aiming at; all he wanted was that an artistic deed, such as had never been known before in the history of the world, should be acknowledged. The festival had grown out of a perfectly disinterested endeavour to give to the German people a theatre of their own, a musical-dramatic style, a new dramatic form, born of their own peculiar development, and, however slight the success, he might fairly think that his efforts deserved a mild, lenient and sympathetic judgment. The critics thought differently. Those who were attracted to Bayreuth by genuine enthusiasm for German art might be counted by hundreds, but along with these, how many deputies from the enemy's camp had smuggled themselves in under the cover of *Patronatscheine!* The German press had worked very successfully to injure Bayreuth, and to make the festivals impossible during the arduous years when the work of preparation was going on, by alternately pouring ridicule upon it, and then smothering it in silence. "I never believed that you would carry it through," said the Emperor William

The Press.



Rehearsal at Bayreuth. Sketch by Adolph Menzel.

[1] "Mitschöpfer von Bayreuth."

to Wagner. The press had taken care that no one, from the monarch to the workman, should "believe" in it. And now it was there, and the representatives of the hostile papers were themselves sitting within the sacred precincts of the festival house, which had certainly not been built for them; they faithfully carried out their instructions to tear in pieces, and throw contempt upon everything. This is true of all except one or two of the newspapers of Germany; the *Kölnische Zeitung* was at least moderate, and the *Berliner Börsencourier* enthusiastic.[1] Some of these gentlemen were the same as those who had contributed to the Tannhäuser *fiasco* in 1861; such tenacity of purpose really deserves admiration. The sad part of the story, however, does not lie so much in the attitude of the press; if the press chooses to consider itself the hereditary enemy of German culture, that is its own affair; the depressing thing is to see how entirely the educated public of Germany was led by the press, and believed every word of silly gossip that was written. Out of the newspaper reports grew pamphlets full of the most nauseating and childish trivialities. Some of these ran through twenty editions or more. The victory did not remain with the newspapers, it is true, but in some respects their success was great at the time. They succeeded in keeping the public away from the second and third cycles, and in bringing about a deficit. Wagner was therefore now compelled to sell his *Nibelungenring;* the work which he had completed after thirty years of toil and battle, the work composed for Bayreuth, and for which the Bayreuth house had been built, was handed over to a theatrical agent, just as it was, with all the costumes and scenery. A repetition of the performances in Bayreuth was indispensable, but all hope of this was now gone; the work of his life was consigned to the tender mercies of the operatic stage. The festival plays had to be stopped for the time; they were brought to an end before they had well begun. This was fatal to the second *Patronatverein*, which was founded in 1877, for the purpose of carrying out Wagner's project of instituting a course of training "for singers, musicians and conductors to qualify themselves for the correct and intelligent performance of works of the true German school." The loss to German art has been incalculable. Wagner's influence upon the German stage was unique, and for six years his powers remained neglected; only a few months before his death, *Parsifal*, his last work, was put upon the stage. Such was the work of the press reporters of 1876; unquestionably it forms a part of the history of the festivals.

The artists.

Wagner has himself told us everything which need be told about the festival of 1876 in his *Retrospect*, to which I must therefore refer my readers. Here I

[1] The name of George Davidsohn deserves to be remembered by all lovers of German art, on account of the courageous and intelligent attitude which he adopted. The just, thoughtful and enthusiastic accounts of this eminent journalist stand quite alone; but this is not all. Immediately after Tausig's death Herr Davidsohn replaced him as the organizer of the *Patronatverein* in Berlin, and he continued to work with unflagging zeal for the Bayreuth cause. Herr Davidsohn's sudden death in February 1897 is an irreparable loss.

will only quote what he says about the artists who assisted at the performances: "When I ask myself seriously who it was that made it possible for me to erect a large theatre, completely fitted out according to my own ideas, on the hill near Bayreuth, and in such a way that the entire theatrical world of the present day is unable to imitate it; to whom I owe it that the best musical and dramatic forces of Germany were ready to assemble at my call, voluntarily to attempt the solution of a new artistic problem of unprecedented difficulty, and requiring untold exertions, and to solve this problem successfully to their own astonishment, I must first point to my executive artists. It was their ready coöperation from the first that determined the very few of my friends who stood without to exert themselves to obtain the necessary means." This is only what he often said, and on the occasion of a banquet given in 1882, in the *Parsifal* month, he declared for the last time, and with special emphasis: "In the artists, and in the artists alone, do I set my hopes for the future." This cannot be too often repeated. I said just now that Emil Heckel had saved the honour of the German middle-classes, and I can now say that the German artists, with their genuine, sincere, and enthusiastic attachment to Wagner, saved the honour of the whole German nation. The sins of the scribblers, the race of whom Beethoven said in his wrath, "nothing but chatter about art, with nothing done!!" the credulity, weakness, and half-heartedness of the rest of the German people, all were redeemed by the artists. Goethe says:

> "Niemand muss hereinrennen
> Auch mit den besten Gaben;
> Sollen's die Deutschen mit Dank erkennen,
> So wollen sie Zeit haben."[1]

But to German actors and musical executants this does not apply; they identified themselves with the Wagner cause from the very first, and have earned a share in his glory. It must not be forgotten that at that time some courage was needed to join the standard of Wagner; that these artists had to face "a new artistic problem of unprecedented difficulty, and requiring untold exertions," and to labour accordingly; that in Bayreuth they earned nothing, and were merely guaranteed against loss; that they brought themselves into direct conflict with the press, upon which they were in a great degree dependent. Their action was inspired by enthusiasm; in their hearts there burned the heavenly flame of Prometheus, which the gods seem to have extinguished so effectually elsewhere.

The case is, however, different when we come to mention individual names. In 1876 no Schnorr von Carolsfeld, no Wilhelmine Schröder Devrient, no Tausig or Bülow was among the artists. The attempt to ignore this is not only absurd, but a crime against the majesty of genius. I do not say that it was a positive disadvantage for the first festival plays. Nothing is further from the character

[1] No one, not even the most gifted, must rush in; if the Germans are to render thanks, they must take their time.

of German art than the "star" system, and it is quite possible that a Tausig, for instance, would not have been able to subordinate his stormy genius entirely to Wagner's intentions, as did Hans Richter, with his clear intelligence and his masterly handling of the orchestra. Where the whole was so harmoniously wrought, and the parts fitted so exactly together that the performance could follow every movement of the *Meister*, with a result which marks an epoch in the history of art, it is impossible to single out the names of individuals. If names must be mentioned let them not be only those of the principal singers; the strength of the Bayreuth festivals has always lain in the smaller parts, and in the choruses; nor must we forget musicians of the highest rank, such as Professor Porges, who has had a leading share in these unrivalled performances from the first festival in Munich in 1865 down to the present day. One man of preëminent ability we must name, as Wagner himself has done: Karl Brandt, the superintendent of machinery, the main support of "the whole undertaking" (x. 149), that is of the erection of the house and of the festival plays.

1882. *Parsifal* was first performed in 1882. Full particulars of this festival will be found in Wagner's essay: *das Bühnenweihfestspiel in Bayreuth*, 1882. The victories achieved in the interval by Wagner's works on most German stages and abroad, and the fact that the *Ring des Nibelungen*, which the press had described as a monstrosity, impossible to perform on any stage, passed triumphantly through all Europe, made a considerable impression on the public; the press too began to change its tactics. I could name one writer of pamphlets, who took a great part in the work of destruction, both in 1861 and in 1876, and who in 1882 applied for a free ticket as an "adherent of Wagner." Such adherents were then, as they still are, a very doubtful element in the ideal cause of Wagner and the festival plays. The open enemy now became the treacherous friend. The subsequent history of Bayreuth has taught us what we have to expect from such friends; the war was henceforward directed against Bayreuth, against the heritage sunk in our hearts, against all that we now comprehend in the name Bayreuth.[1] Wagner scarcely lived to see this; on the eve of victory he died.

Hans Richter

1883-1894. Here again the devotion of German artists withstood a severe trial. Very

[1] At the present day the fashion is to speak of Wagner with the highest admiration, and to reserve every kind of insult for those who are earnestly and from conviction attached to him; but let no one be misled by the absurd inventions concerning Bayreuth; these tactics are not new; on July 2nd, 1852, Wagner wrote to Uhlig with reference to an article in a newspaper: "the bitter, malicious rejoinder was directed against my panegyrists; towards myself it was courteous and respectful. The old manœuvre!" So in 1852 it was already an old manœuvre!

few fell away from Bayreuth. The subsequent events scarcely have to do with Wagner's life, excepting in so far as everything which has been done in Bayreuth up to the present day is the direct outcome of projects conceived by Wagner himself. The school-course of 1877 contemplated the eventual performance of all his older works, commencing with *Der Fliegende Holländer* (*cf.* x. 25); afterwards, when the project had been abandoned, and the continuation of the festival plays was dependent more particularly on the power of *Parsifal* to attract an audience, Wagner announced his intention of giving one of his older works every year, together with *Parsifal*. That this intention was not frustrated by Wagner's decease is due to the "marvellously gifted woman" (see p. 94) who had lived for nearly twenty years in direct contact with Wagner, and knew his intentions as no other person in the world could know them. The extent of her share in bringing Bayreuth to pass is difficult to estimate; her efforts were one with those of the great master himself, and it would be wrong to separate them; the will that ruled and the will that obeyed were one. With regard to the festivals of 1876, Emil Heckel's testimony will suffice: "The rare qualities of this distinguished lady contributed much to the realization of Wagner's plans, particularly when the performances were being prepared; how much, is known only to Wagner's nearer friends. . . . Her share in the success of the undertaking is immense."[1] The heritage had sunk deeper into her heart than into any other, and her intellect was better qualified than any other to bring it nourishment; she did not hide it away, but brought it forth to life, to grow, and blossom and bear fruit. Not only was *Parsifal* saved, but eventually *Tristan und Isolde*, *die Meistersinger*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* were all performed.[2] Especially the two last-mentioned works came like a revelation, when performed at Bayreuth. Wagner himself often declared that he had never seen them performed as he had imagined them; everywhere the drama was put aside as superfluous, the great popularity of these works rested upon a misunderstanding, or at least upon a very imperfect understanding of his artistic intentions (*cf.* v. 174, ix. 253; R., 12, etc.). In Bayreuth *the drama* is fully and vigorously worked out; the works which gained most were his early ones, because of the "bit of opera still left in them," and men now knew for the first time how the poet had imagined them. The reality of the festival idea, and its capabilities, had been shown in the performance of the *Ring* in 1876. *Parsifal* had "consecrated" (geweiht) the stage for its further mission; *Tristan* and *die Meistersinger* had insured the victory of Bayreuth, and made its supremacy over every other theatre in the world indisputable, it had brought lovers of art in thousands

[1] See Heckel's pamphlet, mentioned above.

[2] The festival performances in each year have been as follows: 1.) 1876, *Der Ring des Nibelungen.*—2.) 1882, *Parsifal.*—3.) 1883, *Parsifal.*—4.) 1884, *Parsifal.*—5.) 1886, *Parsifal, Tristan und Isolde.*—6.) 1888, *Parsifal, die Meistersinger.*—7.) 1889, the same.—8.) 1891, *Parsifal, Tristan und Isolde, Tannhäuser.*—9.) 1892, *Parsifal, Tristan und Isolde, die Meistersinger, Tannhäuser.*—10.) 1894, *Parsifal, Tannhäuser, Lohengrin.*—11.) 1896, *Der Ring des Nibelungen.* In 1897 it is intended to give *Parsifal* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen.*

from all ends of the world to the festivals; but for *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* it was reserved to initiate men into the deeper being of Wagner's art; these works, written during the crisis in his life, have brought the new dramatic form before our eyes, and afforded us a view into the very heart of the composer.

Hermann Levi

Felix Mottl.

That is, in a few words, the work accomplished by Bayreuth since the death of its great originator; that is how the heritage has been preserved. I have just said who was the soul of these great deeds, and the name of the man whose devoted efforts alone made them possible has also been mentioned. Amongst the artists many were changed in the course of time, as Wagner intended that they should be. Hermann Levi and Felix Mottl, the conductors, deserve to be mentioned as the permanent supports of the musical part of the performances. And during the last few years there has resided in Bayreuth another musician, who must be regarded as bearing a most important part in the festival plays, both on account of his eminent abilities and because he, and he alone, has devoted himself entirely to the Bayreuth cause: Julius Kniese.

Julius Kniese.

One more name cannot fail to occur to us; one which I can scarcely pronounce without emotion: that of Siegfried Wagner. "A marvelously beautiful and vigorous son, whom I can boldly name Siegfried; he will grow up with my work and give me a new long life" (see p. 92). For some years now Siegfried Wagner has been active as musical assistant at the festival plays. His eminent talent for conducting has quickly earned him a European celebrity. When we realize in how many other directions his artistic gifts have shown themselves; when we know the firmness, and at the same time the childlike simplicity of his character, the ripeness of his judgment and the constancy of his purpose, we shall feel inclined to regard Richard Wagner's words as a prophecy. Siegfried Wagner has grown up with the work of Bayreuth; with him may it prosper and impart a new long life to Germany's great poet! May God grant it!

SIEGFRIED WAGNER

The Bayreuth Idea

> To all who celebrated the festival with us, the name Bayreuth became a precious recollection, an encouraging idea, a motto full of meaning.
>
> Richard Wagner.

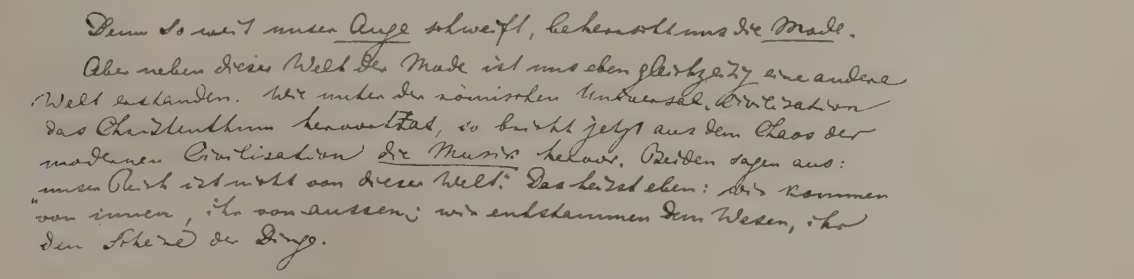
The idea.

Who it was that first used the term "Bayreuth idea," I am unable to say. It is to be found in Nietzsche: "To save at least his greatest work from these successes and vilifications, both due to a misunderstanding, and to exhibit it in its own rhythmic character, as an example for all time, Wagner conceived the *idea of Bayreuth*. Along with the ferment in men's minds (after the war of 1870) he thought he could perceive the awakening of a high sense of duty on the part of those to whom he wished to confide his precious possession. Out of this two-fold duty grew the event which sheds a strange sun-light upon the next years; it was thought out for the sake of a distant future, a future which was possible, though incapable of demonstration; for the present, and for the men who lived therein, it was little more than an enigma—or an abomination; for the few to whom it was given to assist in the work it was a foretaste, a presentiment of great things to be, whereby they felt themselves blessed and blessing, far beyond the short span of their own life; for Wagner himself it was a gloomy succession of labour, care, thought, vexation, a new eruption of hostile elements, the whole illumined by the rays of self-sacrificing faithfulness, transforming it

into joy unspeakable."[1] It is remarkable how in the course of this passage the concept of the "Bayreuth idea" becomes wider; at first it is confined to Wagner's own thought, namely that of saving his greatest work, *der Ring des Nibelungen*, from a success due to misunderstanding. This is the starting point, and instead of prosily drawing wider and wider circles around it, Nietzsche causes this Bayreuth, like the Grail in Parsifal, to appear gradually before our eyes, becoming more and more vivid, until at last we distinguish the deeper import, the purely ethical motive, "the rays of self-sacrificing faithfulness"; while the form of the thought, the outer semblance which captivates the eye, is still artistic. In the introduction to this chapter I spoke of Bayreuth as a symbol, round which circles could be drawn; but it is something more than a symbol; it is a living deed, and the figure of the dramatic centre with widening circles round it is only introduced for the sake of clearness; looking deeper, we must say: the thought from which the deed has sprung is a world-embracing thought; this fact does not depend upon any arbitrary hypothesis of our own. We may discuss the limits of art in the abstract as much as we will, but not those of the artistic thought of Bayreuth; this is the work of an individual; *so*, and not otherwise was his art; he received life and light from afar, and his mighty brain sent new life and new light back from itself, away into the furthest regions. What does lie with ourselves, and is limited by the individual capacities of each, is the extent to which we can and will penetrate into the thought, that is, into the whole philosophy which it embraces. Bayreuth is and remains Bayreuth. The festival house itself bears evidence of being something more than a theatre built according to the notions of an individual artist. The Bayreuth house could only have been conceived by a man who grasped the artistic development of a whole people, and caused it to bear fruit in his own thoughts and emotions. The design of the edifice carries us far beyond the German nation; however different the technical demands of modern art are from those of the time of Sophocles, everyone who enters the festival house feels the summer breath of Greek art playing around him; here is no mechanical restoration of things long past; it is a spiritual rebirth of that which is old and yet eternally young. The man who built it carried Greek art within himself, as a part of his own soul. Wagner calls his festival house "a provisional makeshift, carried out with the most inadequate materials"; the rough beams and tiles have been the sport of many a shallow-pated scoffer; and yet, why has it such a charm? why, as we gaze from the heights around, does the eye always turn again to contemplate this one building, outwardly so poor and unadorned? Because we feel that here a great thought of civilization has been at work. Does any one suppose that the waggon of Thespis was remarkable for richness and splendour? He who saw it, and knew its import for mankind, must he not have stood spellbound? So, too, do we stand spellbound before the Bayreuth festival house, and recognize in it the visible symbol of the Bayreuth idea.

[1] *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, second edition, p. 67.

I have already spoken in detail about Wagner's doctrine of regeneration. Many people suppose him to mean a return to the rough state of nature, and feel not a little shocked at the proposal. The sight of the Bayreuth festival house ought very quickly to dispel such notions; in the Bayreuth art-work poems in words, tones and colours unite with a way of thinking and feeling enriched by the experience of centuries, intensified by familiarity with suffering to produce a unity of expression with wideness and variety of action unknown before; a thousand roots bind it to the deepest things which the human intellect has brought forth; it has grown up with the highest aspirations of the human soul, and it is impossible not to acknowledge that man has here reached the summit of his culture, that he was never further from the rough state of nature. This fact constitutes in my opinion the greatest obstacle in the way of a full understanding of the Bayreuth idea; Schiller and Wagner were right when they called our civilization "barbarous." The majority of educated people are much nearer to the so-called "state of nature" than they themselves suppose. It just depends upon what we understand by the term: whether a state of nature means absence of electric-lighting and information, or an undeveloped state of the intellectual and moral capacities. For instance: I was once engaged in an argument about *die Meistersinger* with a highly cultivated musician, a man possessed of an enormous fund of information, not only in his own profession, but also in the most various departments of knowledge; he maintained the characteristic features of that work to be great wealth of counterpoint, and a frequent employment of the chord of the major ninth; the action he declared to be quite insignificant, like that of an opera, and everything which people professed to find in it he said was put in by themselves. Now, supposing that through some wonderful chance a party of negroes



Facsimile of a Passage from *Beethoven* (ix. 144).[1]

from New Guinea had enjoyed a musical education, and that in the evening, while squatting round the fire, and watching their slain enemy as he was being

[1] So far as my eye can see, we are governed by *fashion*. But along with this world of fashion another world has come into being. Just as Christianity issued from the universal civilization of the Romans, so does *music* break forth from the chaos of modern civilization. Both say: "our empire is not of this world; that is, we come from within, you from without; we grow out of the very nature of things, you from their appearance."

roasted, the conversation turned upon the score of *die Meistersinger;* in what way would their remarks differ from that of my learned musician? Counterpoint and chords of the ninth; that they could hear, but nothing more, because of their entire want of intellectual culture. How should the negro understand Wagner's words: "In the composition and performance of *die Meistersinger* the object before me was to hold up to the German public a picture of its own true nature, which had heretofore only been presented in blurred misrepresentations, and I hoped to earn a sincere recognition in the hearts of the nobler and worthier portion of the German middle-classes" (x. 161)? Or supposing that someone tried to explain to him that Wagner's music is not intended merely to awaken pleasure in beautiful forms, but is "a new language, in which things eternal can be expressed with unmistakable certainty; in which the seer and poet in tones will manifest the unspeakable beyond the range of conceptual thought" (x. 321)? And what if he endeavoured to bring the purely human action of *die Meistersinger*, that which is far beyond its mere German significance, home to the psychic intelligence of these wild children of nature, in the way that I tried shortly to do in my third chapter, namely by the light of our knowledge of the true nature of music? Of course he could not do it, because such things require, not indeed learning in the narrow sense, but a high degree of intellectual culture. A very large proportion of the dwellers in Europe is made up of such savages wearing the dress of civilization, and that is why I think that the far-reaching thought which inspired Wagner's entire work like a life-giving atmosphere will continue to be "an enigma or an abomination" to many.

For another reason it seems to me unlikely that the thought will ever be grasped in its entirety by more than a minority of people, or that what is meant when Bayreuth is called "an encouraging idea" will ever be known to more than a few. Kant, whose judgment in such matters is sober and temperate, declares that art requires "imagination, understanding, intellect and taste." The essential characteristic of the Bayreuth idea is that art is to become a power of civilization. Schiller, in his letters on æsthetic education, had the same idea in his mind, but indistinctly, and he alludes to it only in general terms; with Wagner it becomes a reality. The building is ready for the æsthetic education of men; it stands on the hill at Bayreuth. But what if the union of "imagination, understanding, intellect and taste" is rarely to be found, even among those who flock to Bayreuth? The force of bayonets is felt equally by everyone; art affects each individual in a different way; some scarcely at all, others very superficially, and only in very highly organized minds is it a real, direct *power*. It follows that the Bayreuth idea must necessarily take very different forms in the minds of different people. With the musician whom I named just now, the circle comprised in the concept Bayreuth was not even the whole theatre, but only the orchestra, probably no more than the printed score lying on the conductor's desk. On the other hand an academically trained philosopher like

Heinrich von Stein felt that he could fully comprehend the speculations of Giordano Bruno only from the standpoint of Bayreuth; only when his view had been sharpened by living contact with this all-revealing art was he able really to *form a picture* of that philosophy; it was the living organic art-work, viewed as a power of civilization, that led Stein to his profound meditations on the relations between language and philosophical cognition, and between language and mental culture; it was the living experience gained from his contact with the Bayreuth poet that enabled him to compose his first work on the æsthetics of the German classical authors, and his treatise on the Growth of modern æsthetics. In his poetical compositions, *Helden und Welt* and *die Heiligen*, he surveys the history of the world, and the growth of the human race, if I may so express it, from the high ground of the Bayreuth idea. Carlyle, who, without knowing it, belonged to Bayreuth, found out that "the heart of Nature is everywhere music," that truth could only be obtained by its means, and that logic only touched the surface. Between the *savant* in the rough state of nature—or, to be more polite, let us say in "the state of the chord of the major ninth," and such highly gifted natures as these, whose minds have been rendered sensitive to every impression by the widest and most refined culture—any number of degrees are possible. For many Bayreuth must always remain a book with seven seals.

Mythical thought.

One remark I have to make which will lead us on to many other considerations. I have adopted the term used by eminent writers before me, and spoken of the *Bayreuth idea* (Gedanke); but it must be observed that many of our best and most competent friends, especially amongst the executive artists, or those engaged in the practical representation of Wagner's works, find themselves very much in the position of Brünnhilde, who fought for Wotan's thought, but who

> "nicht ihn dachte
> und nur empfand,"[1]

or of Siegfried, who says:

> "Nicht kann ich das Ferne
> sinnig erfassen."[2]

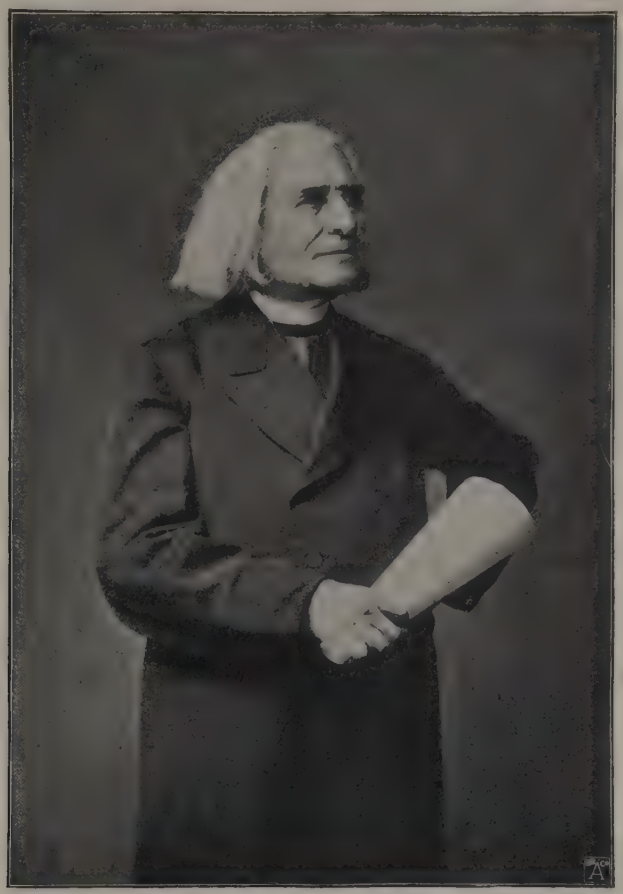
The word "idea" is perhaps not very well chosen for what is really an artistic conviction, or view; perhaps we had better say an artistic *faith*. Nietzsche observes very truly of Wagner himself that "he thinks in visible and sensible occurrences, not in concepts; that is to say, his mode of thought is *mythic*, like that of the people at all times." Thought which is not conceptual is, according to the ordinary acceptation of words, no thought, in the strict sense, at all; it is *seeing*. The difference between the two is very clearly brought out in the interview between Christ and Nicodemus. The philosopher asks for clearly defined concepts, and raises objections to the Saviour's *mythical* way of thought, but he is interrupted with the simple remark: "We speak that we do know,

[1] (I) thought it not; I only felt it.
[2] I cannot grasp the distant by my sense.

and testify that we have seen." These words might be applied to many of the most faithful, active, and successful adherents of Bayreuth; they know nothing of the relations of art to culture, and are not concerned about the influence of either upon the other, and yet they *know;* that they show by their conduct; they testify that which they have seen—namely, by their deeds. It is quite possible to be within the magic circle of the Bayreuth idea, to accept it as "a motto full of meaning," without being a thinker, without indeed contemplating anything but the purely artistic work, its technical form and its bodily realization.

From this a very important inference may be drawn. Nietzsche explains what he means by Wagner's mythical way of thought in the words: "like that of the people at all times." The artist's mode of thought is in fact essentially akin to that of the people, and for this reason perhaps his artistic thought is likely, more than any other, to exert the widest influence. Without wishing to affect the cheap *rôle* of a prophet, I may express my firm conviction that the influence of Wagner's thought, of the Bayreuth idea, great and increasing as it now is, is destined in the future to show itself in the thought of mankind at large in a degree scarcely dreamed of at present. The "people" are not only the labouring classes, but ourselves as well. The single individual, the man of education may try to resist a natural movement such as that expressed in Wagner's thought and in his works, he may struggle against it with all his might, but it will be in vain; the strongest will win, and the strongest is he whose thought is mythical. The unique vividness of Wagner's art-works, a vividness which they possess in common with only a few of the greatest master-pieces of dramatic art, is also characteristic of his thought; whether he is speaking of history, or of politics, of constitutions, laws or religion, of slavery and aristocracy, of labour and capital, of language, literature and music, science and philosophy, or of the characteristic qualities of the Spaniard, the Frenchman, or the Englishman, of Shakespeare, Calderon, Hafiz, Napoleon, Robespierre, Palestrina, Mozart, Bach, Spontini, or Auber, it is always something he has *seen* that suddenly rises up before us. Let us take one figure, which one might imagine to be sufficiently far removed from the artist, that of Robespierre. How much has been written about this one man! The judgment of historians was contradictory, and people could only gather that they were dealing with a paradox of some kind; and what a stir there was, what pæans were sung a few years ago, when Taine, after long study, lifted one corner of the veil in his *Origine de la France Contemporaine!* Thirty years earlier Wagner had said exactly what Taine wrote, only Wagner said it more incisively, more vividly, and looked, as it was his wont to look, far beyond the individual to the general aspects of the question: "Robespierre's tragedy lies really in the wretched condition in which he found himself when his aims were accomplished, of not knowing what he was to do with his power now that he had it . . . he was not led to the adoption of evil means by the consciousness of a lofty purpose; it was rather to cover his want of purpose, to conceal his own emptiness, that he turned to the frightful system of the Guillotine . . . the wretched man, reduced

as he was at last to doling out his own threadbare *vertu*, could only find his object in the means themselves. So it is with all these purely political heroes;



Franz Liszt, 1886. Last Photograph.

they perish of their own incapacity, and we may hope soon to see the entire race vanish from the pages of history."[1] The picture here drawn has, as I have said, been confirmed in every respect by recent historical investigation, and Robespierre's features are a witness to its correctness. Wagner did not need to search old records that he might understand Robespierre; he testified that which he had seen, and everyone who reads his words may now see Robespierre's entire moral personality, his very soul laid bare. In *Wahnfried* once, when the con-

[1] For full information I must ask the reader to turn to the original passage in the letter to Roeckel, dated January 5th, 1854, as I have only given a few extracts. Similar remarks will be found in *Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?* (x. 326).

versation turned upon Shakespeare's position in history, Wagner observed "Shakespeare is the judge[1] of the Renaissance." When questioned about the genius of Liszt, he replied that Liszt was a perfect musician, whose peculiarity consisted in an unusual faculty of grasping forms with the eye of a poet. I might quote hundreds of remarks of this kind,[2] little masterworks, each expressing a truth exhaustively, and bearing the stamp of finished artistic form. Herein lies the justification of Glasenapp's Encyclopædia. His method of treating questions of a more abstract kind is similar. There is scarcely a problem in sociology more full of inner contradictions, or more difficult to state and elucidate from every point of view, than that dealing with the relations of the individual to the social body, and the antagonism between the natural desire of the individual for freedom and the necessary limitations imposed by society at large. This is the fundamental problem of statesmanship. Wagner approaches it by the light of the Œdipus myth, and he has discussed the question in all its ramified details with such brilliancy and clearness that one of the darkest subjects which ever engaged the human mind suddenly becomes, not only clear, but in the highest degree attractive (*cf. Oper und Drama*, iv. 68-80). Wagner has declared the poetic faculty proper to be the power of creating myths anew, and this is the normal and necessary form of his thought. "I can only speak in *art-works*," he writes to Roeckel (R., 69). He here lays the stress upon the word "*art-work*," but we may, without doing violence to his meaning, lay it upon *only*: I can *only* speak in art-works." Wagner's thought was art, and so was his speech; his thought was real seeing, his speech presented clear, definite, living pictures, like the pictures on the stage. Such a mode of thought, and of speaking and writing, possesses one property in common with the highest art, namely that it can never be thought out; it is wisdom, inexhaustible as nature herself, and in strong contrast with the logical, analytical, strictly-conditioned procedure of science. In the mind of genius (to use a simile borrowed from optics) Nature undergoes total reflection, whilst in the logical process the reflection is only partial. What we understand by the Bayreuth idea is akin to artistic genius; it cannot be measured off with scale and compasses; it is a spring, from which, as the old writers of fairy tales would have said, "the water of life" flows in a never-failing stream.

The educated barbarian.

It must not be supposed that any contradiction exists between this statement of the great and general influence of Wagner's thought and what I said before about the idea of Bayreuth being only intelligible to a minority. The last is true of the idea regarded as a concept, whereas Wagner's "thought in visible and sensible occurrences" has found at once its visible monument, its symbol, and its motto in the festival-house at Bayreuth, and this influence will extend far beyond

[1] German: *Richter*, meaning something more than our word judge, namely one who condemns, censures, convicts. Wagner means that Shakespeare shows up the immorality and wretchedness of this pompous, vain-glorious, learned civilization of the Renaissance.

[2] *Cf.* Wolzogen's *Reminiscences of Richard Wagner*.

the minority. Only one class of men are beyond the reach of the Bayreuth idea, either in its mythical and artistic, or its logical aspect; an ancient Indian poem says: "Not even *Brahman* can save the man who is led astray by little knowledge." I have the support of such eminent authorities as Paul de Lagarde for asserting that modern school education is specially adapted to lead men astray; what is taught at the present day is "a little knowledge"; enormous as is the mass of information drummed into the pupils, it consists of mere isolated fragments strung together; true knowledge, true mental culture, demands unity of view, and particularly an equal development of all the functions. Kant required imagination, understanding, intellect and taste; which of these four is systematically cultivated in our schools? Lagarde says of modern school education, "it covers the people with an impenetrable slime of educational barbarism, the most disgusting of all barbarism, making life in Germany a penance, and shutting away the light and air which God has bestowed upon us."[1] The educated barbarians, those savages in the dress of civilization, hated, persecuted and anathematized Wagner during his life; the Bayreuth idea is far from them; it is not so much an *enigma*—enigmas do not exist for people of this class—as an abomination. But putting such aside, we may well hope that the "Bayreuth idea" will exert its influence, not only upon cultivated minds, but upon the great and healthy mass of the people.

The idea in its relation to art.

The reader will probably have observed that the most important thing for me in this section is its title. In using the term "Bayreuth idea" my object is more particularly to draw attention to the fact that something exists to which this term can be applied, that in the view of the builder of the festival play-house and of his friends, the important point was, not the theatre, but the thought. I find it, however, impossible to give a clear and concise definition of what is meant by the Bayreuth idea; why it is impossible will be evident from what I have already said. We must admit with Hans Sachs:

> "Fass' ich es ganz,—kann ich's nicht messen!
> Doch wie wollt' ich auch messen,
> was unermesslich mir schien?"[2]

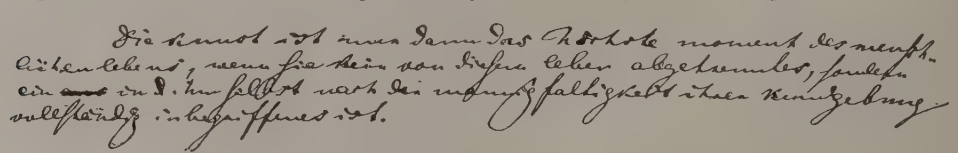
Still, though I cannot measure what is immeasurable, though I am convinced that the idea can only be truly grasped through the impression of the living art-work; that it will be comprehended and approved only by him to whom Bayreuth is a precious recollection, I have no wish to evade a question which in itself is quite legitimate. To say everything that might be said would be impossible, and I will therefore select two points, and endeavour to bring them before the reader as shortly as I can; at the best I can only give a few indications for those who are sufficiently interested in the question to read about it for themselves in Wagner's works; they will be surprised to find what an influence this Bayreuth idea exerts,

[1] *Politische Aufsätze*, p. 121.

[2] When I grasp it fully I cannot measure it! but how should I measure what seemed immeasurable to me.

even now, upon the thoughts and actions of some of the best of our contemporaries. The first point which I will discuss has to do with art pure and simple, and how to obtain it; we will then consider artistic thought in its relation to universal cognition.

In volume x. of his works Wagner says (p. 47): "I realized the fact that for art itself to attain its true position in the world, the soil would first have to be found, just in the same way as I had found a soil for the correct performance of my works in the projected festival plays in a house specially built for them; this soil could not be sought in art; it had to be supplied by the world to whom the art was offered. We had therefore to pass the entire state of modern civilization in review, to hold up the ideal art at which we were aiming like a mirror before it, and to see its reflection therein." Any comment upon these words would only deprive them of their force and clearness; the idea of Bayreuth, as it appears when viewed from the standpoint of the relation of art to life, is completely expressed in them. I need scarcely remind the reader that this view—that the new soil for art must come from the world itself—was a fundamental one with Wagner, and influenced his whole life. The words I have quoted were written in 1881, when Bayreuth was an established fact, "an encouraging idea," but even as far back as 1840, when Wagner was in Paris, he "entered a new path, that of revolution against the public art of the present day," and from that time onwards the conviction that a new soil must be found for art continued to grow upon him, and is expressed with more and more distinctness in his writings (see pp. 117 and 191). Another point to which I would draw attention is the clearness with which Wagner indicates the inter-relation between art and the "world." When Wagner, the artist, is called a *reformer*, when the idea which that festival house serves is called an idea of *regeneration*, our educated barbarian shrugs his shoulders, or at most he answers: "Shoemaker, stick to thy last"! but those who know how closely everything in Nature is bound up together, how entirely the world is under the law of correlation, who feel all distinctions between smaller and greater causes to be artificial, inasmuch as the smallest impulse may lead to immeasurable consequences, will refuse to be put off by such a very shallow argument as this.



Facsimile from the Original MS. of *Ein Theater in Zürich* (v. 57).[1]

It is precisely when the artist remains entirely by his art that he feels the necessity, as Wagner did, of a profound reconstruction of our civilization. And he *must* feel it; he is merely following the law that governs all living creatures; he is struggling for his existence against a world which makes his existence

[1] Art is the highest moment of life only when it is not separate from life, but with all the varieties of its expression fully contained therein.

wretched, and threatens to extinguish it altogether. The festival house at Bayreuth may fairly be interpreted by the light of Darwinism. It is an emblem of battle, a standard for armed warriors to rally around; this significance of the Bayreuth idea is by no means to be rejected, for only in battle do forces nerve themselves for action. In an unpublished letter of his earlier years Wagner writes: "Any one who admits that I am right is lost, unless he possess strength for life and death," and Nietzsche says: "for us Bayreuth means the hallowing of our arms on the morning of the battle."

Those who have not yet thought this question out can learn from Wagner's writings, especially from those of the Zurich group, how mischievous, how fatal to art is the civilization of the present day. We do not even know what great, living art is, how it pervades the whole life, and how immeasurable is its influence; that is what the world has to learn, and the day is coming when, in spite of the arguments and proofs of doctrinaires to the contrary, no one will remain untouched by its influence.

Bayreuth.

While we are on this subject I must explain why the name *Bayreuth* is more appropriate to denote this belief in the boundless power of art than is the name *Wagner*. How imposing is the name of the great man, the name of *Richard Wagner*, who first recognized and proclaimed this power! how wretched and poverty-stricken that of *Wagnerianer*, Wagnerite! And how meaningless! It is as if people hoped to attain a share in the glory of the name by adding a termination! Is it intended to express reverence? Wagner does not require adulation of this kind. From Aeschylos to Shakespeare, from Hafiz to Schiller, from Palestrina to Beethoven, from Pheidias to Raphael, that is the world of art of which Wagner never ceased to speak in glowing words: narrowness and party spirit were far from him. He who fails to recognize any one of the true masters has no part in Wagner. All these "greatest and noblest spirits, whose voices have been heard for centuries crying in the wilderness," are conjured up before our eyes, and with generous indignation he exclaims: "we have heard them; their voice still rings in our ears, but the living words of their message are lost in our mean and frivolous hearts; we tremble at their glory, while we laugh at their art; we admit them as sublime artists, whilst we refuse their work; for they cannot construct the great, genuine, single art-work by themselves, we must coöperate with them." Herein lies the significance of Bayreuth, it stands away from the mean and frivolous world, and calls only to those who wish to coöperate, friends who will share in the creation. A most important constituent of the Bayreuth idea is that it invites the public themselves to act, "to meet the artistic deed half way." No single man, not even a Richard Wagner, is at the head, but "the holy German art," of which Hans Sachs speaks in such moving words, expanded to a purely human art; the task is to call the "great, genuine, single art-work" into being, without considering who made it. Richard Wagner is a man who lived and suffered; his name must not be misused, but fondly preserved "in the covering shrine of the heart." Bayreuth is his work, he has

given it to all who will accept it, and Bayreuth is the unpersonal "motto," uniting the art of the past, the present and the future, bringing together all those who think with Wagner that a new soil must be prepared for art, and that we must all share in the work. That was the meaning of the beautiful and much misunderstood words spoken by Wagner from the Bayreuth stage to his friends after the close of the first performance of the *Nibelungen*: "You have now seen what we can do; it is for you to exercise your will! And if you *will* it, we have an art!" This strong, determined will is a part of the Bayreuth idea.

Art and religion.

By thus merely indicating the influence which art, as understood in the Bayreuth sense, is destined to exert upon culture and civilization,[1] I feel that I have explained my meaning more clearly than I could have done by discussing everything that Schiller and Wagner have said on the subject. For the rest I can only refer my reader to the latter portion of the section on Wagner's doctrine of regeneration, where he will realize the full scope of the influence referred to. I have there spoken of the close relationship between art and religion, as indicated in Wagner's writings. With regard to the paths to be followed by men in their lives, Wagner very soon adopted a creed widely divergent from any doctrine of progress in vogue at the time. He was then far from the church, and descried only an enemy in the state, which indeed appeared to him in the light of a *collective* Robespierre; to this state he opposed his own ideal, "the *religious* consciousness of society, the consciousness of its own purely human character" (*Oper und Drama*, iv. 90); and here the deep truth expressed by him in after years is already indicated, namely that "only a general religion is a true religion" (x. 60). It may be asked how such questions came to find a place in a work on the opera and the drama. Simply because the artist realized even then that "the art-work is the living representation of religion," and that "religion contains within itself all the conditioning factors of art" (see iii. 77 and 146). Even then the young artist was searching for a true religion, but without finding it; *our* religion seemed to him a mere means of earning money, simple egoism. And then he saw that art and religion, both being in an evil case, were closely connected together; that religion, if it was to be the salvation of art, must first itself be saved by art. People have often spoken with ridicule of the "Bayreuth religion," but perhaps, if there were such a religion, it would be better than none at all; Wagner said when he was young: "Religions are not invented by the artist; they grow out of the people" (iii. 77), and when he was old he wrote: "To invent religions is impossible" (x. 322). It is the same misunderstanding over again. The problem of life, like all other problems, can be approached from different sides; directly we cease to contemplate it from afar, and endeavour ourselves to exert an artistic influence upon it, the impression will be communicated throughout its entire being. Art will not *become* science, or philosophy, or religion, but just in the same way as we have seen that religion reacts upon philosophy and science, science again

[1] See what has been said in the second chapter, pp. 192 to 198.

upon philosophy and religion, so too we shall see the arrogance of science broken by art, and a new direction given to philosophy, while religion will be awakened to new and blessed life. This at least is aimed at by the "Bayreuth idea."

I will now pass to the second exemplification of the Bayreuth thought and explain it with a few observations.

Art and philosophy.

I have just spoken of the possibility of art exerting an influence upon philosophy. It would not be without precedent. One of the most lofty philosophies that ever displayed the brain of a single man as a true microcosm was that of Plato. The artistic instinct of that enormously gifted people, the Greeks, was shown especially in their never allowing analysis free rein; every concept was clothed in a form, the manifold was individualized and brought before the view to become a centre for new life to spring from, the single, perishable fact became the divine, immortal idea. This living impulse, as we find it everywhere in the life of the Greeks, receives its metaphysical expression in Plato's doctrine of ideas. The enduring strength of Plato's philosophy lies in its not having sprung from arbitrary individual will, but from the intuitive, artistic, mythic thought of a whole people. In his classical work on the philosophy of the Greeks, Professor Zeller says that Plato is too much of a poet to be fully a philosopher. However we may understand these words, which I have not the slightest wish to dispute, it seems to me that the more we consider the question, the more we shall find Plato's greatness to lie in the very fact that he is a poet, and that he draws his philosophy from the intellectual life of a highly artistic people, a task which could only have been undertaken by a poet. The same point is dwelled upon very strongly by F. A. Lange, who remarks with reference to Plato: "it ought to be distinctly realized that we have here to do with poetry, and not with knowledge." Whether other systems of philosophy contain much *knowledge* is not the question at present; we need not hesitate to admit that Plato's philosophy is poetry. Of course I cannot here discuss the question in detail, but that I may be rightly understood, I will mention one other Greek philosopher—Democritus. The idea of the atom is surely the boldest myth that the human mind ever ventured to create. The philosophy of Democritus has one feature in common with that of Plato, namely that things are brought visibly before the eye, and in that respect it is essentially Greek. But in accordance with an immutable law of human thought, the endeavour to attain material tangibility produces something not cognizable by the senses, a sort of abstract perception. Plato is an artist, Democritus is not. Plato's thoughts are not always *thinkable*, but they can always be perceived as pictures; they are artistic myths. The philosophy of Democritus can be perfectly conceived in the mind, down to its minutest details, but his *scientific* myth necessitates a complete repudiation of all human evidence; it amounts to saying: "admit that $2 + 2 = 3$, and I will explain the world to you" (this, by the way, is the method of all Natural Philosophy). Midway between these two great creative systems of the

Greeks we find another school of thought, that of Aristotle, which many regard as the school of philosophy proper. With all our admiration for the encyclopedian capacities of his mind, we are forced to admit that his intellectual process is strictly barren, since it consists of nothing more than registering, analysing, reducing to system, and criticizing results already obtained; its value for the human brain is very much the same as that of gymnastics for the muscles of the arm. I have mentioned Plato here more especially because the influence of art is so conspicuous with him, though it does not take the form of artistic creation proper; art was rather the atmosphere of his life, and showed itself in the poetic turn of his mind; it is particularly recognizable in the literary form which he adopts for the communication of his thoughts. In our own century a philosopher has arisen, who in many respects bears a remarkable likeness to Plato: Arthur Schopenhauer.[1] Nothing is more characteristic of Schopenhauer than the importance which he attaches to art, more especially for philosophic cognition. It can scarcely be necessary for me to quote passages in support of this assertion; sufficient has been said thereon in the second chapter of this work (see p. 192). In the very same year in which Schopenhauer's first work appeared in print, the poet, Richard Wagner, was born. The philosopher had said: "philosophy must be sought by the way of art," and "only those thoughts which have been seen before they are thought have any reproductive force, or can become enduring"; the poet too has spoken profound words on the philosophic significance of art, and I beg the reader to consider them carefully, for they throw light upon the deepest nature of true art. Wagner describes what we call the artistic faculty as "the faculty of developing pictures into life; art seizes the pictures contained in the concept and converts it from an allegory or simile into a revelation.[2] Those who see nothing beyond the mere letter will perhaps take exception to the word "revelation." It is in itself a figurative word. Art undoubtedly presents the same thing as Nature. Schopenhauer says: "art possesses an importance and a value which are rarely recognized, inasmuch as it consists of an intensification, a more complete development of the things around us; its creations are *the same* as those of the visible word, only more concentrated, more complete, and produced intentionally and consciously; it may be called, in the fullest sense of the words, the flower of life."[3] Wherever we find an inscrutable secret, when we reach the point where further questioning is peremptorily forbidden, we shall find the same secret in art, the same prohibition; only here everything is clear and convincing, and many things which did not appear inscrutable on a superficial view are now seen to be so; this is clearly a revelation.

[1] This is true even of his bodily form; see the medical opinion (based on the *post-mortem* examination) regarding Schopenhauer's athletic build in Gwinner's book on Schopenhauer.

[2] The passage which I have ventured to condense in this sentence will be found in volume x. of Wagner's collected works, p. 278.—G. A. H.

[3] Schopenhauer's *Sämmtliche Werke*, iii. 315.

This influence of art upon philosophy is intensified by the habit of thought produced by artistic contemplation, which may be shortly indicated as that of limiting abstraction to the field assigned to it by Kant, that of pure reason, and regarding logic as a mere method of thought, and nothing more. In this respect artistic thought is closely akin to natural science (in so far as natural science consists in the observation of Nature), a fact not without importance for its philosophical value. The reason why the natural science of Aristotle was in many respects so feeble, and so far behind that of his predecessors, is that it could never shake itself free from logic; the clearest cognitions were haunted by the spectre of systemization and abstraction. The fundamental principle of true natural science is the unbiassed, loving contemplation of Nature itself; the student of Nature is like the poetic seer, he too testifies that which he sees. And nowhere in Nature does he see logic! nothing is more illogical than the world, nothing more unreasonable, or, rather, contrary to reason. And now we meet with an unexpected result; however different these analytical cognitions of the student of Nature are from the synthetical cognitions of the artist, they both lead to the perception of unity. Thus men were led by observation to the concept of *species* and then to that of *genus;* the genera of living beings were united in *families*, and a scheme like that of Darwin again brings all living beings under a still higher unity. Similarly with inorganic science. It is true that directly natural science attempts to bring facts and empirical observations together, directly it tries, as Darwin did, to unite them into a theoretic, poetical whole, it will fare as did Democritus; the further it departs from observation, the more does it come under the dominion of the laws of logical thought, and its tendency will be to produce abstract cognitions, which cannot be realized as perceptions. Its real function is, not to work out a hypothetic explanation of the world, but to make things visible. This fact of the subordination of abstract knowledge to concrete observation points to so close a connection between art and science that a mutual influence between the two may be taken for granted.[1]

Art and natural science.

I think that even these scattered and disjointed remarks will suffice to indicate to the more thoughtful of my readers a culture in which art occupies the first place, and is "the highest factor of human life"; but only as being "the living representative of religion," as expressing "the outcome of the consciousness achieved by science," as containing "all wisdom." The single individual can, as I have explained (see p. 197), never be more than a fragment of the entire man; and mankind at large seems in danger of gradually losing touch with the individual; but art possesses the power of restoring the equilibrium; it may be that this view will appear visionary or chimerical to many; but at least they will admit it to be a great and noble thought. It too forms part of the Bayreuth idea.

Recapitulation.

In conclusion it remains for me to speak of one very common misunderstanding; at the same time the wide view that we have gained from the stand-

Wagner and Schopenhauer.

[1] Novalis, the geologist and poet, has finely said: "The student of Nature and the poet have shown themselves as one people, and speak one language."

point of the Bayreuth idea will enable me to cast one more glance into the heart of the great and good man whose life I have undertaken to describe.

It is evident from what I have just said that Wagner's philosophy is closely allied to that of Schopenhauer. Yet there exists a wide and impassable gulf between the two, for one presents the world as seen by the poet, the other as seen by the metaphysician. What this denotes will be evident when we consider that one leads to a state of negation, the other to one of affirmation. Schopenhauer ends by the negation of the will to live, Wagner with the affirmation of a possible regeneration. Faith is indeed the soul of art. In his younger years Wagner spoke the inspiring words: "we wish to rise from the degrading slavery of handicraft, with its pale financial soul, to free artistic humanity with its radiant world-soul!" (iii. 38); in his last work, *Parsifal*, composed after a life of bitterness and disappointment, he cried in mighty and convincing tones: "der Glaube lebt!" *Faith lives;* the music at the close brings a metamorphosis of the doleful strain[1] which Parsifal's genius has recognized as the divine lament of Nature, borne on the brilliant tones of the trumpets and exalted to a triumphant reassertion of faith, "the radiant world-soul." A Brahman would say: Schopenhauer stands on the ground of the highest *âtman*, Wagner upon that of *avidyâ*. The important thing for us to realize is that the two are not identical. The difference may be observed in numerous details. Take for instance Schopenhauer's views on women; even those who spend lives of self-sacrificing devotion he calls "foolish attendants on the sick!" What Wagner thought of them may be learned from his Irene, Senta, Elizabeth, Brünnhilde.[2] In what a wretched light does the love between man and woman appear to Schopenhauer! what a glorious monument has Wagner raised to it in *Tristan und Isolde!* Still more clearly does the difference between the two appear in their relation to Hindu philosophy. Wagner naturally has drunk deeply from this unequalled source of purest thought. Schopenhauer felt fully satisfied therein, Wagner not; for in a philosophic atmosphere such as that of India no art can flourish.

Richard Wagner.

This fact is historically demonstrated, but if we go deeper we must admit Wagner's hopes for universality, his dreams of "egoism resolved into communism," to be far indeed from the Buddhist doctrine: "The protection of the *ego* is the *ego;* the refuge of the *ego* is the *ego*." Wagner the artist acts in a way directly contrary to these and all other metaphysical doctrines; he never pursues individual, but always general ends; herewith his way of thought and of feeling is seen to be in the strict sense *religious*. In none of his other works does the word "redemption" (*Erlösung*) occur so often as in his *Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, written at a time when, as we have seen, he had broken with the churches and with historical Christianity (see p. 132). He there indicates as the object to be gained: "the redemption of the utilitarian man in the artistic man." The

[1] See p. 329.

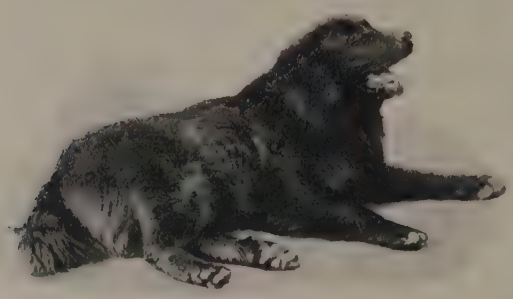
[2] In a letter to Liszt (L., i. 215) Wagner says of his Brünnhilde: "never was woman so glorified before."

concept: "art for art's sake" does not exist with Wagner; with him art and life are inseparable; just as little did he recognize thought for its own sake, or redemption by cognition in the cell of the cloister; such notions are contrary, not only to Wagner's theories, but to his entire being. I might say individuals do not exist for Wagner, but only the entire indivisible, human race. "Directly *all* are no longer free and happy, all must be equally slaves and miserable" (see p. 139): "Nothing is more worthy of love than the community of mankind" (iii. 265); that is the keynote of Wagner's whole feeling and thought. Incapable as he is of finding satisfaction in any possible form of egoism, in whatever sophisms it may be concealed, he continues to meditate on the problem how the utilitarian man may be redeemed in the artistic man, and soon (in 1850) finds the solution thus: "the mediator between force and freedom, the redeemer, without which force is brutality, and freedom caprice, is *love*." True the young *Meister* continues in his rage against "lying churches" to tell us in the same sentence that he does not mean Christian love; but we do not believe it, nor is the qualification "Christian" at all essential; the artist's endeavours are religious, and his religion is that of love. In 1855 he writes to Liszt: "The divine doctrine is that which prepares for the liberation of personal egoism through love" (L., ii. 80). Wagner's artistic creed is inseparable from the religion of love which found such beautiful expression in his very first work, *Die Feen*. "I revolted from love," he says, "not from envy or vexation, and so I became an artist" (iv. 326).

It appears to me that we here gain a very very deep view into his heart, and even from these early works we may gather that the later Bayreuth idea would be an idea of love, and would therefore prove to be something more than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. This is perfectly true. All the heroic efforts of his later life to carry the highest dramatic art on to victory, that it might lead to the regeneration of the human race, are due to his deep conviction that "there is nothing more worthy of love than the community of mankind," to his deep religious belief that one thing alone is wanted, one thing alone of avail: to teach men love. Another time he says: "Love is the mother of society, and must therefore be its only principle." Of what use was the teaching of the philosopher: "the negation of the will to live on the part of the individual resolves the whole world, and redeems it therewith." Of what use was his daily experience of the stupid malice and hatred poured upon his ideal by men. "Faith lives!" Wagner's faith was laid in community, and in the triumphant power of love; of this faith nothing could rob him. Just as Parsifal perceived the divine lament, so did the wide heart of the artist-sage perceive only "the lament of Nature" in the turmoil that arose around his Bayreuth idea; before his view "the phenomenal forms of the world dispersed as in a prophetic dream"; "no phantom of a yawning abyss, of hideous monsters of the deep, of the malignant progeny of the will rending its own flesh, now terrified his soul"; there sounded in his ear "the fearless, hopeful, comforting, world-

redeeming soul's sigh of mankind united in the universal lament" (*cf.* x. 319).

He heard not only the lament of men, but also that of all Nature. Nothing that Wagner has written throws such a light upon his inmost soul as the letter on vivisection. Here he only attacks the dogma of utilitarianism which dominates our entire civilization, and he proposes instead, as the moral principle of life, "sympathy with all that lives." He explains that "the same spirit breathes in the animal as that which gives life to ourselves"; that "man's first consciousness of himself and of his own nobility is gained from the animal," and the whole culminates in the confession of faith: "let our endeavours with respect to the dignity of man be to exhibit it just where man is distinguished from animals, namely in sympathy with animals" (x. 270). I have been able to say only very little about Wagner's love for animals (p. 51); numerous anecdotes are told about him in this connection; one of the most touching relates how in Lucerne he suffered his hand to be severely bitten, whilst washing and bandaging the paw of a strange dog which had been run over, so that he was unable to write for a long time. He was perpetually surrounded by his animals; many of his dogs have become historical, for instance his Newfoundland "Robber," who attached himself to Wagner of his own accord in Riga, accompanied him on the stormy passage to London, and has been immortalized in his story, *Ein Ende in Paris* (see p. 155), and in later years his Russ and Marke. Schopenhauer is undoubtedly in the right when he says that nowhere does true goodness of character show itself so unmistakably as in sympathy with animals (Sammtl. Werke: *Grundlage der Moral*, p. 242), and the example of Indian thinkers may be quoted in support of the assertion that nothing shows profoundness of insight more convincingly than a living consciousness of the *tat-tvam-asi*, of the inner oneness of all organic nature. For the right knowledge of Wagner and of his Bayreuth idea, therefore, it is above all things necessary to know his relations to animals.



Wagner's Dog *Marke*.

The more Wagner had to suffer, the more deeply did he feel that salvation could only come from unreserved sympathy. In 1853 he wrote to Liszt: "The condition of lovelessness is that of suffering for the entire human race" (L., i. 236), and in one of his last essays (*Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?*, 1880, x. 332), we read words in this connection which will be the last that I shall quote; perhaps no passage could be found in which the deep wisdom of this great man receives fuller expression: "What is it that destroys our civilization, if it is not the want of *love?* How can the youthful mind learn to love the

world as it gradually unfolds itself before him, whilst we continue to inculcate nothing but caution and suspicion in his dealings therewith? Surely there is only one right way, namely to explain the lovelessness of the world to him as its measure of suffering. In this way his sympathy will be awakened, and will lead him to realize the causes of the suffering, and himself to renounce the impulses of his passions, so as to diminish and divert the suffering of others." After a reference to Schopenhauer, not, be it well observed, to his metaphysics, but to the fact that "its final result puts all former philosophical systems to shame, in acknowledging the moral significance of the world," he continues: "only that love which has sprung from sympathy, and has been intensified until it has completely broken the will of the individual, is the redeeming love of Christianity, the love which quite of itself includes faith and hope—faith as the truthful, certain, divinely confirmed consciousness of the moral significance of the world, hope as the blessed knowledge of the impossibility of this consciousness being deceived."

This is how the Bayreuth idea was reflected in the heart of the great German *Meister*, Richard Wagner!

"Die gute *That*, das schöne *Wort*,
Es strebt unsterblich, wie er sterblich strebte!"

Appendix I

Translation of a speech delivered by Wagner in the *Vaterlandsverein* at Dresden, on June 14th, 1848

What is the Attitude of republican aspirations toward the Monarchy?

To be able to put this question clearly to ourselves, let us first enquire in what our republican aspirations essentially consist.

Do you seriously believe that our first step towards progress must be to adopt a republic, and abolish the king? Do you believe this, or do you only want to make timid people believe it? Are you ignorant or are you malicious?

Republican our aspirations are, and I will tell you what their aim is: it is for the well-being of all; the so-called achievements of the immediate past are not our object in themselves, but merely a beginning.

Keeping this before us, the first thing that we desire is to destroy the last remnant of aristocracy. Our noblemen are no longer feudal lords, who can ill-use and tyrannize over their vassals as they list; if they now wish to remove all remaining cause of offence, let them give up what is left of a distinction which may prove a shirt of Nessus, and burn into their very bones, unless they cast it off in time. Do you point to your ancestors, and think it disgraceful to resign the heritage which you have received from them? Remember that we too have ancestors, and though their deeds are not inscribed in family archives, their sufferings, their vassalage, the oppressions of every kind which they have undergone, are written in letters of blood in the history of the last thousand years. Forget your ancestors! Cast your titles and distinctions from you! Then we promise to be generous, to erase the memory of *our* ancestors from our minds, that we may in future live as children of one father, brothers of one family. Hear our words of warning; do it of your own free will; there is no escape, and Christ says: *If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell.* And one thing more I would say: Cease to arrogate to yourselves the exclusive right of attendance upon the sovereign; request him to relieve you of the barren duties, honours, privileges, which now bring reproach upon the court; give up calling the king *your* king; make him dismiss his motley array of gentlemen ushers, grooms of the chamber, and other lackeys, those survivals of a frivolous time, when every prince deemed it his duty to ape the French Louis XIV. Turn your back upon the court, while it is an asylum for idle noblemen, until it is the court of a whole, happy nation, where every individual will look with joy upon his prince, and recognize in him the first of a free and contented people. For the same reason we say: No longer an upper chamber! the people are one; there is no first and second among them; there can and shall be only one house of representatives; it shall be an edifice, noble in its simplicity, its high-vaulted

roof resting upon strong and lofty columns; why disfigure it with a partition? why two small chambers instead of one spacious hall?

And we ask for the extension of the suffrage to every Saxon-born adult; the poorer and the more helpless the man, the more does he need his share in the legislation, that he may be saved from pauperism and destitution.

Another thing we ask for our republic: that is, universal military service for purposes of defence; neither a standing army nor a communal guard; what we aim at is neither a modification of the one, nor an extension of the other, but a new body, to come gradually into existence and absorb them both, a popular militia, fitted for the purpose which it has to fulfil, and independent of all social distinctions of rank.

And do you think that when all the classes now sundered by envy and malice are united into a single free nation, embracing everything to which God has given human life and breath on the soil of our beloved German fatherland, we shall then have reached our goal? nothing of the kind! but then we can begin work in earnest; when we know wherein lies the cause of all the misery of our social life, we shall be in a position to ask ourselves whether the crowning work of creation, man, with all his intellectual gifts, and his artistic capabilities, can have been destined by God to be the slave of the pale metal, the most inert and the deadest of all the products of nature.

Is it right that the king of nature, man, made in the image of God, should render service and tribute to a graven symbol? Is it right that money should have the power of crippling his free actions, of luring him into the paths of excess, avarice, and passion? This will be the struggle for freedom of suffering and depraved humanity. Not one drop of blood will it cost, not one tear, not a sacrifice of any kind; only of one thing we must be convinced, namely, that the highest happiness and welfare of mankind at large will only be attained when as many industrious beings as the soil can possibly support are collected upon it, and united into well organized societies, enriching and cheering each other by the mutual exchange of their various capabilities. We must realize the most sinful condition of human society to be that where the activity of individuals is curtailed, where the forces at our disposal cannot be fully utilized; the only limit we acknowledge is the number of individuals capable of being supported by the soil. We must realize that human society is maintained by the activity of its members, not by money; and when our principles have been established, God will give us light to find the *laws* for applying them in life; the spectre of money will then depart from us, like a phantom of the night, and with it the whole system of financial speculation, banking and usury, both in public and in private life. This is what is meant by the emancipation of the human race, the fulfilment of the pure doctrine of Christ, now hidden beneath ostentatious dogmas, invented in days gone by to bind a barbarous and foolish world, and to prepare it for a future, to the final consummation of which we are now consciously passing. Or do you think you detect communistic doctrines in my words? Is it folly or is it malice that makes you confound the necessary release of mankind from a degrading bondage to the coarsest form of matter, with that most insipid and senseless of all doctrines, called communism? Do you not see that this doctrine of the mathematically equal division of property and earnings is but an unthinking attempt at the solution of a problem which is indeed felt, but the solution of which is impossible, and therefore still-born. Will you condemn my project as senseless, because the other is senseless? Beware! After three and thirty years of undisturbed peace, society is disordered and impoverished to such a degree that starvation surrounds us on every side. Be advised before it is too late! It is not your charity that is wanted; learn to recognize the right of men as decreed by God, or the day will come when the forces which you have scorned will arm themselves for

battle; should their cry of victory be communism, incapable though communism be of permanent life, a very short turn of its reign will suffice to undo all that has been achieved in a civilization of two thousand years. Do you think that I threaten? No, I only warn

And when our republican endeavours have advanced to this point, when this, the most important of all problems for the happiness and welfare of the social state has been solved, and we have entered upon our right of free human dignity, will the struggle then be over? No! it will then begin! When the final questions of emancipation have been answered, when human society has been regenerated, and has brought forth a new and free race, with its powers fully developed in every direction, we may pass to the highest of all the problems of civilization—its employment and extension. We will cross the sea in our ships to found young Germanies, endowing them with the experience of our own life-struggle, that their children may be reared to God-like excellence. We will do it better than the Spaniards, to whom the new world was a priests' slaughter-house; differently to the Englishman, for whom it was a tradesman's till. We will do it in German fashion, and nobly. From morn till eve the sun shall shine upon a free and beautiful Germany; no oppressed people shall dwell, either in the parent country or in its younger colonies; Frenchman and Cossack, Bushman and Chinaman shall be warned and illumined by the rays of German freedom and German clemency.

You see that our Republican struggles will never cease; they will continue from century to century, pouring happiness on the entire human race. Is this a dream, a Utopia? It is, whilst we remain talking and balancing chances in a spirit of mean and selfish doubt; it is so no longer when we pass to joyful and courageous action, when every day brings forth some new and good deed of progress.

You ask now: is this all to be accomplished with the aid of the king? I have said nothing that is incompatible with his being retained; if *you* consider it impossible, you yourselves pronounce his death-warrant. But if you admit it to be possible—or, as I do, to be more than possible—then the republic would be the right form of government, and we need only require *the king to be the first and truest of all republicans*. Who is better qualified to be the most sincere and most convinced of republicans than the prince? *Res publica* means: the concern of the people, the commonwealth. What single individual can represent the commonwealth like the prince, with his whole way of thinking, of feeling and working? How, when he has become conscious of his high mission, should he ever be tempted to minish his own sphere by identifying himself with one small section of the whole? However warmly we, as individuals, may desire the general welfare, not one of us can be so genuine a republican as the prince; each is forced by the stress of daily life to divide up his labours into numberless fragments, but his efforts cannot be divided; they belong to the whole. And what sacrifice do we ask of the prince that he may fulfil his glorious mission? Is it a sacrifice that he shall cease to regard the free citizens of the state as his subjects? Laws, ratified by himself, have already cancelled this relation of the people to the crown, and the king who sincerely desires to uphold the spirit of these laws will feel it no sacrifice formally to renounce the thought of the people being subject to him. Is it a sacrifice for him to part with what is left of his courtly pomp, his antiquated honours, titles and orders? We can never think so meanly as to believe this of the simplest, most sincere prince of our time; we know that he would not hesitate to bring a real sacrifice, if he felt that an obstacle between himself and the free love of his people would thereby be removed.

What is it that justifies us in penetrating into the soul of this rare prince, and expressing convictions which perhaps many of our fellow-citizens will condemn? It is the spirit of our time, the fact that the situation in the present day is without a parallel in

the past, *that* is what endows even the simplest with prophetic vision. The decision is now before us; two camps have arisen among the nations of civilized Europe; the cry of one is: "*Republic!*" that of the other: "*Monarchy!*" Do you doubt that the time has come when this question must be decisively answered, that it includes everything which now shakes human society to its foundations? Will you ignore the divine inspiration of these times, pretend that we have been through it all before, that when the excitement has subsided things will settle down again into their old places? Then, indeed, God has struck you with blindness to all eternity! No! with us men of the present time rests the decision! Lies shall exist no longer; Monarchy, in the sense of the rule of one individual, is a lie; it has become one through constitutionalism. The man who sees no chance of reconciliation throws himself boldly and defiantly into the arms of republicanism pure and simple; but the one who still hopes will cling to existing institutions; he will realize that if the attack is directed against monarchy, only in exceptional cases is it against the *person* of the prince, but always against the *party* which raises the prince on high, that its members may live and pursue their own ends under his shadow. The *party* is what we have to conquer. Will the contest be a bloody one? It must be, and it must touch both the prince and his party, unless some means of reconciliation can be found. The means of reconciliation lie with the prince; if he is truly free, if he is the father of his people, he can with one high-souled resolve plant peace where otherwise war seems inevitable. What do we see when we look around, and seek among the thrones of Europe a prince chosen by God for this high mission? A blinded and corrupt race, incapable of any noble deed! Think of Spain, Portugal, Naples! What a painful spectacle do the German states present—Hanover, Hesse, Bavaria!—Let us close the list! God has judged these weak and evil princes; their weakness has spread. But if we look nearer home, we find in our own country a prince, whom his people love, not in the old traditional way of loyalty to the royal house; no, it is himself, his very own self that we love. We love him, because he is what he is; we love the purity of his virtue, the loftiness of his honour, his rectitude, his clemency. I exclaim loudly and joyfully, from the bottom of my heart: *that is the man of Providence!*

Prussia wishes to preserve her monarchy for the sake of her own national feeling—a vain sentiment which will soon die away; Austria, because the sovereign is the only person who can bind together a promiscuous mass of different nationalities—also an impossible state of things, and bound to fail in the end. But Saxony is impelled by love of her prince, by the joyful desire to call the best of men her own; this is no cold political principle; it is the full, warm conviction of love. And this love shall decide the question—not for the present moment alone, but for all time. Inspired by this mighty thought, I exclaim, boldly and enthusiastically: We are republicans; the achievements of our time have brought the republic close before us, but the name is fraught with offence and danger; one word of our prince will dispel both. Let the republic be proclaimed, not by us, but by the prince, the noblest, the worthiest king; let him but say: I declare Saxony to be a "*free state.*"

The first law of this free state would ensure him his position. It would be: "*The highest executive power shall rest in the royal house of Wettin, and shall pass by law of primogeniture to his descendants.*"

The oath which we swear to this state and to this law will never be broken; not because we have sworn it (how many thoughtless oaths are sworn in a momentary impulse of joy!), but because we have sworn it in the conviction that the new order will bring lasting happiness, not on Saxony alone, but on all Germany, and will exert a decided and beneficial influence on Europe. I, who now boldly and enthusiastically speak

these words, believe that I never kept the oath sworn to my king more loyally than to-day.

Would this lead to the dissolution of the Monarchy? Yes! but at the same time it would bring the emancipation of the king. Do not deceive yourselves, you who wish for "a constitutional monarchy on the broadest democratic basis." As to the basis, either you are dishonest, or, if you are really in earnest, you will only succeed in torturing the king to death, while trying to bolster him up. Every step that is taken on this democratic basis is a new usurpation of the powers of the monarch, that is of the sole ruler; the principle itself is an insult to monarchy, which is impossible in any other form than in that of autocracy, the rule of one man; every advance made in constitutionalism is a humiliation for the ruling sovereign, a vote of want of confidence in the monarch. How shall Love and Trust prosper in a ceaseless and unworthy conflict between two irreconcilable principles? The monarch's life will be embittered by disgraces and insults; let us spare him such a state of semi-existence, and do away with monarchy altogether; the rule of one person is incompatible with the rule of the people, but the king will be emancipated, and will rise to his true dignity in the republic. The hereditary king at the head of this free state will be just what a king, in the higher sense, should be: the first of the people, the freest of the free. And would not this be at the same time for Germany the most beautiful application of the words of Christ: whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant? For in serving the freedom of all, he makes humanity become conscious of the incomparable, divine import of the conception of Freedom. The further back we trace the history of the kingly principle among the Teutonic nations, the closer do we find the agreement between our new conception and the old one; the course of the historical development of kingship will end where it began; its furthest departure has been in the foreign, un-German idea of Monarchism.

Were we to collect signatures for a petition in favour of these principles, I am convinced that hundreds of thousands would be ready to sign; its provisions would bring reconciliation between all parties now in conflict—at least between all whose intentions are honest. But only one signature is wanted to decide the matter: that of our beloved prince, to whom we fervently wish a happier lot and office than he enjoys at present.

This speech appeared as a supplement to the *Dresdner Anzeiger* of June 15th, 1848, and is there signed:

"DRESDEN, *June 14th*, 1848.

"A MEMBER OF THE *VATERLANDSVEREIN*."

Appendix II

Translation of a letter written by Wagner to Herr v. Lüttichau, Intendant of the Royal Theatre at Dresden (see facsimile opposite to p. 55)

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to request the favour of about fourteen days' leave being granted to me, within the town, to enable me to undergo a course of diet, rendered necessary by symptoms of a gastric complaint with which I am threatened.

At the same time I take the opportunity of discharging what I regard as a personal duty, in defending my conduct with respect to a step which, although it does not affect my position as an artist, I should be sorry to see misunderstood by you.

At a time when the right of expressing an opinion upon our public institutions is conceded even to the most ignorant, a man of culture will regard it as his duty to exercise this right. The conflicting views held by different parties in this town have been so emphasized by the party contests of the last fortnight, that the onlooker is filled with anxiety and suspense. I have joined the society more especially identifying itself with progress, partly because in the progressionists I recognize the party of the future, partly because they, more than any of the others, need to be restrained by prudence and moderation. I have rarely attended their meetings, and never taken part in their debates, but have confined myself to observation, and the impression in my mind latterly is, that their defiant attitude has been provoked by the violent attacks of the so-called monarchists. It is no crime, according to modern ideas, to declare the best form of government to be that of a republic, but the first thing called up in the mind of most people by the idea of a republic is the abolition of the sovereign. Never yet have I met a speaker or political author who had grasped the idea of the king being the sacred centre round which every conceivable kind of popular institution might be established; the notion of a republic is always taken to involve the abolition of the monarchy. It is this that has deterred the populace and its leaders from deciding in favour of the immediate introduction of the republican form of government; they want to connect it with all kinds of conditions, not indeed criminal in themselves, but likely to lead to endless misunderstandings. My object, therefore, has been to prove to the people, in the clearest way possible, that whatever we may wish to attain, the principle of kingship in itself is not opposed to our endeavours; that everything can be accomplished by retaining the sovereign, and will be much more durable. The popular party is irritated at the present form of the court, with all its survivals of the past; I have heard people by no means belonging to the coarser classes use expressions which betray the drift of popular opinion very clearly; they say that when the king is gone the court will cease! Now, I ask, are we to molest the king for the sake of these external things? No! Let the externals be done away with, and with them the cause of complaint against the king will be removed. Such were the circumstances in which I was placed,

and such was the course I followed; after considering all that was being attacked, I arrived at the conclusion that the popular hostility to the sovereign would vanish. Of course I felt a desire to bring both parties, monarchists as well as republicans, to my own way of thinking, to unite them in one object, the retention of the king, and therewith the preservation of peace. At the same time I wished to show them the true meaning of the great word *Republic*, so misunderstood by their own party; to get them to see how the king could only attain his true position in the republic. This was what impelled me to compose my discourse. If I wished to gain my end, a certain amount of collision with existing institutions was inevitable, but the fear of meeting with opposition could not deter me from expressing my own deepest convictions; my object however was not strife, but peace and union. The warmth of my convictions led me to represent my views in person. On entering the assembly I found the idea of the republic—now undeniably a ruling thought with a large section of the community—always connected with the abolition of the sovereign. With the deliberate purpose of laying a good and beneficent thought before the assembled company, I at once resolved to read my paper; even if it failed in every other respect, one object at least was gained: never was such an enthusiastic eulogy of our king uttered in that assembly, and nothing was received with more enthusiasm than the passages where I spoke of his lofty virtues. This very applause, and the words that occasioned it, awakened the rancour of my enemies; this is not the place for me to express my opinion about many of these popular leaders; I am filled with the gravest misgivings, for it was just my enthusiasm for the sovereign that displeased them. My own experiences are of little consequence, but the case is different when I find myself entirely misunderstood elsewhere. That the king should have regarded my plans as impracticable, I can understand; but that he should have censured my conduct in holding up to the masses and their prosy leaders a poetic picture of kingship as I conceived it, has, I admit, filled me with grief; this and many other indications show me how completely I am misunderstood. I see that at the present day it is dangerous to express an independent thought, or any that does not bear the stamp of some party; the promise which my wife obtained from me, that I would refrain from personally concerning myself with the questions of the day, was scarcely needed. To my sorrow I see that the time for intellectual warfare is past. I am possessed by a dark, fearful foreboding that the war will now soon be waged by the rougher methods of the masses; Prague is not far; fearful things are contemplated in Berlin, and may reach a regicide development. I have cast a glance at the populace of Dresden, and see nothing criminal there at present, but who shall answer for the frenzy of passion when it reaches us from outside?

In this trouble, this deep anxiety, I sought to gain breathing space by a step which, in my own inmost heart, seemed to me the way to reconciliation. Should my dark forebodings prove unfounded—oh, the better! And if my step has given offence, it has failed in its object; if it has only annoyed instead of reconciling, then it rests upon a delusion, for which I sincerely ask pardon of all whom I have annoyed.

Index of Names and Subjects

The following Index is intended, not only as a guide to the names occurring in the work, but also, with the table of contents at the beginning, to be used for purposes of study. All the more important subjects have therefore been included. Under the head Wagner, I have given a complete scheme, which I hope will prove useful. *Lohengrin*, for example, is not, as the table of contents might lead one to suppose, discussed in one particular place, and then put aside; the earlier works are always brought to bear upon the later ones, when these come to be considered. Similarly too with the speech in the *Vaterlandsverein* (see Appendix I.); I have not given a detailed criticism of this important document, but the reader will have no difficulty in finding all the passages where it is referred to with the aid of the Index. With the art-works, however, I have only thought it necessary to quote the more important passages where they are mentioned; the theoretical works, pamphlets, etc., are only mentioned when the particular work as a whole is referred to. My first intention was to give a complete list of all the quotations, but they were too numerous. Some names, such as those of Liszt and Uhlig, occur again and again in connection with letters quoted in the text, but they are only included in the Index when there is reference to some matter in which they are personally concerned.

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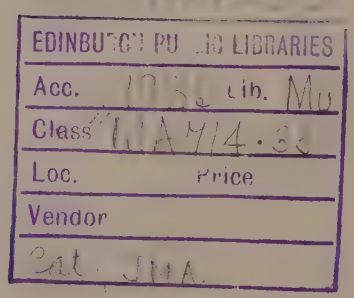
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